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SING TOGETHER!

CHORAL SINGING AS A SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING METHOD FOR ACTORS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts in Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Dedicated
to the memory of Ole Lien,
who loved to dance.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	ii
Abstract	vii
Introduction	ix
Chapters	
1 Singing Together	1
Courage	2
Community	4
2 Breath	7
Alignment and Release	11
Support	22
3 The Speaking-Singing Connection	28
Resonance	32
The Singer's Formant	36
4 Call and Response	38
Listening and Imitation	40
5 Musicality	47
Rhythm	49
Eurhythmics	51
Melody	56

Verse	58
6 Conclusions	61
Works Cited and Consulted	63
Appendices	
A Course Syllabus – Vocal Storytelling	67
B Course Syllabus – Stage Voice & Speech (first semester)	72
C Course Syllabus – Stage Voice & Speech (second semester)	82
D Course Syllabus – Adv. Stage Voice & Speech – Dialects	89
E Course Syllabus – Adv. Stage Voice & Speech – Shakespeare	96
F OxyRhythm Exercises by Janet B. Rodgers	103

Abstract

SING TOGETHER! CHORAL SINGING AS A SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING METHOD FOR ACTORS

by Daniel C. Dennis, M.F.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008

Major Director: Janet B. Rodgers
Associate Professor of Voice & Speech, Department of Theatre

Voice and speech training for the actor has traditionally defined itself as distinct from the vocal training of the musical theatre or opera singer. The separation in philosophy and practice by trainers of actors and singers reflects the resultant capabilities and proclivities of our performers. Those performers generally sing *or*

act, and if asked, will sometimes do both, but may damage their voices in the process. This study aims to explore and reveal how actors may develop a greater sense of courage and trust, have easy access to breath, find freedom in their bodies and voices, become better listeners and therefore more engaging actors, uncover untold depths of characterization, unearth resonance that communicates easily, and discover the music of rhythm and melody in their spoken voices, all through the use of ensemble singing in the actor's voice and speech classroom.

Introduction

I can sing, and speak to him in many sorts of music.

William Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, Act I, sc. 2)

*‘Oh, my dear, but you see, God doesn’t mind a bum
note!’*

Patsy Rodenburg (*The Right to Speak* 11)

Why do we sing the national anthem at the beginning of a baseball game? What purpose does the traditional “seventh inning stretch” with its singing of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” serve? Why does the praising of the divine in cultures the world over, from Tuvan throat-singers in central Asia to the Amazon basin, from Javan *wayan kulit* performances to a Pentacostal church service in the United States involve so much singing? Why, even in cultures in which it is not acceptable or normal to express grief deeply, do we allow ourselves to sing together in order to grieve?

I have been singing my entire life. Before retiring, my parents were choral music teachers. Growing up we sang together as the family that made up the spine of the

church choir. I learned to sing first by imitation – by joining with someone else, listening well, and allowing my body to copy the example I observed. I learned to sing next by singing my part while my family sang other parts. In my childhood, singing together was fun.

Thus, one can imagine my confusion when, at some point in my early teenage years, I began to realize that not everyone enjoyed singing. Yet nearly everyone I knew enjoyed listening to music; this was true of my classmates, but it also seemed to be true for adults. Music was and is an unspoken, communal expression of emotions that can not be otherwise expressed. It is a way to get in touch with something that is not apparent or readily accessible in the quotidian realities of growing up. If we all enjoy music so much, why don't more of us actively participate in the making of it with that instrument that is so close we always carry it with us – our voice?

Our voices *are* our very selves – or at least it seems so. Joan Melton, in *One Voice*, writes: “We are not our voices, but it is easy to feel as if we are because voice is integral to who we are, to how we perceive ourselves, and to how we are perceived by others” (129). Because when we speak or sing, we commit ourselves in a very real way, our voices seem inseparable from our identities. What ever it is that we express with our voices cannot be taken back. Even if we ask to rescind our comment, what has been expressed affects all that follows. When someone criticizes my voice, he or she cuts me to my soul.

Unfortunately for many of us, we have been thus afflicted. At some point in our youth, and most likely quite repeatedly, many of us were told that we were too loud, that we should stop talking, or that it would be better if we stood in the back and just sang quietly. This criticism came, in all likelihood, from those we respected or perhaps even loved – our teachers and our parents. Those people may not have intended to do lasting damage, but the result is very clear: many of us only sing now when we are sure we cannot be heard by others. Our cars and our showers are the lucky recipients of unbridled expressions of emotion. For many of us, ironically, perhaps our commute is when we are most free.

It is my belief that each of us, actors and non-actors, has one voice capable of expressing an infinite variety of meanings in an infinite variety of ways. Speaking and singing exist within a continuum of expressions of which the voice is capable. Because of the physical habits learned by the body to protect the self from emotional damage, most actors' voices require training to fully utilize the potential of their instrument. **This thesis aims to make manifest the inclusion of choral singing in the acting curriculum of university and college theatre departments as a method of unlearning habitual tensions, unlocking emotion, connecting the singing voice and the speaking voice, and unleashing pure freedom of creative expression.**

Joan Melton, in her very useful book *One Voice*, says it well:

Actor training programs frequently include techniques for every possible use of the voice except singing, and training curricula for singers seldom include theatre voice. Acting for Singers is becoming a regularly required course for many opera majors but is seldom

supported by the prerequisites of theatre voice and movement. Likewise, singing is often available as a peripheral and/or optional course in actor training but is seldom supported by appropriate connecting links to the rest of the actor's work. Singing and speaking are accomplished by the same instrument; we can move easily from one activity to the other in the same breath; and singing and speaking onstage have similar technical requirements. Therefore, learning these and other vocal activities from a similar perspective can increase your overall level of skill, flexibility, and confidence, both onstage and off.

(135)

During my time at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), I taught eight classes in the theatre department for eighty different students – primarily undergraduates, but also a handful of graduate students. A few of these people have been my students each semester for the last two years. The full sequence of Voice and Speech training for B.F.A. performance majors at VCU consists of two introductory semesters of foundational voice and speech work for actors in their second year in the performance major, followed by two advanced semesters for third-year performance majors, one in dialects and another in Shakespeare. In my time at VCU, the dialects class was the only one in this sequence that I taught only once. The other three I was lucky enough to have taught twice each. In addition, I taught a class of my own creation called Vocal Storytelling: Speaking and Singing in Ensemble-Oriented Performance, which truly was the seed for this thesis.

Throughout this discussion, I will draw upon my experiences and the experiences of my students in these eight classes, as well as the decade previous to coming to VCU in which I worked professionally in the theatre, taught singing and acting to children, and maintained a private voice studio in Seattle, Washington. The format of the discussion is somewhat like using the voice itself – you never know quite where it is capable of going, but with practice and a willingness to play, you may be pleasantly surprised.

1. Singing Together

If therefore, as it would seem now, our ambitions are stronger than the potential to realize them convincingly, consistently, and reliably, if the discrepancy between theory and practice cannot be overcome, then the danger exists that the principle itself – the idea of unity between music and theater – may be open to question.

Walter Felsenstein (Fuchs 17)

Singing together is perhaps one of the oldest methods of sharing emotion between human beings. It is intricately linked with our most ancient forms of worship and continues to be a central way of sharing group identity. In this new digital world, in which generations of people are more connected to acquaintances thousands of miles away via their personal machines than they are to the person standing next to them, choosing to sing together is a physical way to connect people within space and time. It is a part of being human, even in our rapidly changing global culture.

Additionally, it is my belief that one of the most common issues that prevent actors from finding success early in their careers – crucial to the sustained life of the professional performer – is the habitual holding of breath in the body, and the resultant inability to communicate emotion and intention clearly. This is, I believe, also why people of all vocations feel disconnected from themselves and from the people around them – because they are not breathing freely and naturally, a situation which is created by many factors, sitting in a car and in front of a computer screen for much of life chief among them. Singing in unison on a regular basis is a way to free the breath and the voice without consciously “working.” The only essential ingredient is that the singing be enjoyable.

Courage

Many of us live in abject fear of being asked to speak or sing in public. Actors may have gotten over the fear of speaking, although many still dread extemporaneous public speech, but for many of us, actors and non-actors, there is a special kind of terror that belongs to singing in public. That may be why musical theatre is so popular; it is exhilarating to watch and hear someone so moved by a situation that they *must* sing.

Of course, to be so moved, especially in a public arena, requires great trust and great courage. These qualities must be cultivated in the actor from the beginning of their training. It is up to the teacher in that first Voice and Speech classroom to give the gift

of courage to the actor by creating an environment in which students do not judge themselves or others for the sounds they make and in which they are not judged in the moment of sounding by their teacher.

Traditionally, the first step in training the actor vocally is to develop a sense of awareness. What does the voice sound and feel like when it is free? What does it sound and feel like when it is constricted in some way? Students begin the work with some twenty years of habitual tensions that make up what is their normal frame of reference. To begin the work of re-training their bodies, students must develop an objective sense, as well as a subjective sense, of what their bodies, breath, and voices are doing. They must realize that their “normal” is not necessarily the most physiologically natural and effective for communicating with an audience.

The danger exists that, within the actor’s development of their own powers of self-assessment, too much power is given to the “inner critic.” To counter this probability, opportunity must be created for students to work on exercises and activities in which they are not asked to think about what they are doing. We must teach our students how to assess what their bodies, breath, and voices are doing, while also helping them to refrain from judging the sounds they create. There is time for critique, but it is not *during* the act of speaking or singing. In the act of self-judgment the actor constricts and prevents the sound before it can even be made.

Through all this we must recognize that singing is extended or heightened vocalization. It is not how we normally communicate with one another (although,

wouldn't it be interesting if we did?).¹ However, as anthropologists and ethnomusicologists will point out, singing is also completely normal.

Our task, if we are to make our singing voices and our speaking voices one voice, is to bring singing into the classroom as frequently as possible and to allow students to make mistakes, so long as they just keep singing. The first step is to give the gift of courage to our students, to make them believe that they can open up themselves and express their feelings through extended vocalization, and that they will enjoy it. This is accomplished within a positive, non-judgmental environment, in which the focus is on communicating the meaning and feeling of what is being sung across the group.

Community

I have put forth the beginning of the argument for singing in the Voice and Speech classroom, but the question remains - why *choral* singing?

Each of us, taken individually, is a separate entity, a closed system. For many of us this is true practically and not just theoretically, especially now that many of choose to use an electronic means (e.g. mobile telephone, ipod, pager, headphones) of cutting ourselves off from our immediate surroundings and circumstances. Much of what our

¹ Compare the English language to tonal languages like Mandarin Chinese or Vietnamese to begin to examine the possibilities of singing as everyday verbal communication. Beijing Opera and Cai Luong performers are better prepared to connect speech and singing because of this aspect of their native languages (Brandon).

actor-training programs attempt to do is essentially to open our student-actors to the world, to develop a receptivity, a responsiveness to impulse. We spend hours, weeks, semesters of class time playing games and doing scene-work, trying to create a sense of ensemble, in order to get our students to listen to one another, to get out of themselves, to stop thinking, and to just react – to be able to share a real moment of humanity.

I believe music can help us with this goal.

Music is vibration. When we listen to music our bodies act as resonators. Music vibrates us, and our closed selves, our bodies as well as our psyches, shake loose and open. We become more responsive not only to vibration, but to one another. I put forward this notion as another reason why musical theatre is so popular with theatre-goers, why opera fans are frequently fanatical in their patronage, and why young people flock to vast, open-air arenas to obtain the group experience of music.

When we make music, that is when we make the vibrations in our own bodies, we resonate much more than just by simply listening to music. I would like to suggest that when actors sing as a group, those actors share a sensual communal experience that creates openness and receptivity. It creates a communal identity through a shared physiological experience.

As stated in my syllabus for the first semester of Voice and Speech training, “The work we do is personal; you are working on yourself alone. However, we work together in order to share and support each other in what might otherwise be a lonely practice” (See Appendix A).

Singing in an encouraging ensemble environment allows each member of the group to develop a sense of their individual sound within the greater whole. By focusing on singing in unison (literally “agreement”), student-actors are emboldened and begin to feel capable. This seed of potentiality must be planted and germinated with great care if we are to grow actors who will be able to use their instruments in ways that are limited only by their own imaginations.

Many performing arts schools segregate students into separate corners and cut those students off from their own possibilities, sometimes pitting them against one another. Certainly, for many students, benefits can be reaped from specialization. But I am a generalist, who wishes to bring people together in the intersection of the arts. I have found that at the start of training most students have already been told again and again what they cannot or should not do by many figures of authority and even by their peers. If we are to pursue Walter Felsenstein’s goal of “the principle itself – the idea of unity between music and theater,” then we need to begin with what we believe they *can* do – and that is anything and everything they want to do (Fuchs 17).

2. Breath

*The breath is the pneuma, the soul swelling or breaking,
and any exclusive art of breathing is likely to be a
secretly mystical art.*

Roland Barthes (183-4)

Whether singing or speaking we must begin with the breath. It is the source of our capability. Poet Mary Oliver refers to breath as our first language. It is “our own personal tie with all the rhythms of the natural world, of which we are a part, from which we can never break apart while we live” (3). The breath is that which grounds us in the world. But, it also is that which connects us and the truth of our experience to one another. What happens to our breath as our mood changes? “The inner life, without being seen externally, has pressed upon the heart, has tightened or loosened the lungs. *It is as good as language.* We sigh. We pant. We reveal ourselves” (Oliver 3).

When we sing together, not only do we each vibrate our bodies and our psyches open, but we also *breathe* together. Singing or speaking in a choral fashion allows us to

use our breathing muscles – tensing and releasing, tensing and releasing – as though we are one body, one mind. Whether we *are* of one body or one mind is of little consequence. The fact of our *behaving* as we are by synchronizing the very foundation of life, the breath, is what is significant. This speaks clearly to the discussion on community from chapter one.

Working with the breath is a somatic experience; we understand it phenomenologically. And yet, as Roland Barthes speculates in the epigraph to this chapter, there is something about the breath that we cannot quite know completely in the normal experience of our human body. The breath is not only our connection with what is most fundamentally human, it is also that which most connects us with God. Many cultures' myths of origin begin with this notion of the divine breath of life. Chapter two, verse seven of the book of Genesis states: "Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being" (Wansbrough 18). The breath is the bridge between the sacred and the profane.

Having stated this, we must acknowledge that acting as an art form is viewed by the student-actor (as well as by the public at large) as being somewhat mysterious and unknowable, and that only in many years' time will anything done in one's training actually be understood and incorporated. While I actually do believe that the pursuit of the mastery of any art *does* take this kind of time – simply to complete enough repetitions of the form, not to mention to establish an honest sense of self in relation to the wide universe of experience – I also believe that what we bring to the actor's

classroom must be practical and not at all esoteric.

Patsy Rodenburg has written at length on the habitual tensions that live in the body and restrict our ability to breathe. One of her books, *The Right to Speak*, written not exclusively for actors, but for “anyone who breathes and communicates sound to the world” (ix) is a declaration of one’s vocal rights. In it, Rodenburg observes:

Some people hardly dare to breathe, as if by doing so they would offend or seem intrusive. Breath barely enters the body to the lower cavities but stays trapped up around the chest, denied its full life. For others it remains a luxury to take the size and length of breath required to cope with specific experiences. Too often we do not allow the body time to rest and take the needed breath to get over one task before taking on another one. To breathe well is natural, but life experiences can defeat the natural breath and cause it to seize up in a different rhythm.

To breathe low and calmly into our whole body is to touch deep, deep feelings. Is it better not to feel? What might a deep breath reveal and release down inside us? A hidden rage, love, tenderness or fear? So, unlike a baby who operates totally from a natural capacity, we can actually make choices not to allow our bodies the full chance to breathe deeply. We can starve ourselves. This can be caused by something as banal as vanity: not allowing our stomachs full freedom of movement lest we appear fat. But can vanity also cut us off from our feelings and voice? It certainly can.

(143)

In January of this year, I participated in a three-day workshop on Voice and Shakespeare given by Patsy Rodenburg at Michael Howard Studios in New York City. I had been teaching VCU students using her text books *The Actor Speaks* and the

marvelous *Speaking Shakespeare*, so I was familiar with her voice and manner, with the clarity of her ideas, and with her no-nonsense practicality. What she was able to pinpoint for me in my acting was so precise, so exacting, so very personal that she may have done more to help me in a half-hour session of one-on-one coaching than all the teachers, directors, and fellow actors I've studied and collaborated with in thirteen years of work. But what her workshop did for my teaching is what I want to focus on here.

This three-day workshop contained in a nutshell what, at the Guildhall School of Music in London, where Rodenburg is Director of Voice, would be the first two years of training. We focused on two things – the voice and the text. All workshop participants (about thirty-five crammed into a not very large room) prepared a Shakespearean verse speech from one of the plays. We ranged in age and experience from a girl of about seventeen, who had flown all the way from Vancouver, British Columbia, to a couple of women in their fifties, who had worked professionally in the theatre for many years. All of us, from the least experienced to the most, had work to do with our bodies to release the breath itself and the deep emotions that lie hidden until accessed with that grounded breath.

The release and support of breath is the very basis of voice and speech work, something so foundational that if the training of the actor's ability to breathe is not undertaken with sincerity and purpose and remains incomplete, then any amount of further work, from articulation to range to tone quality, will be insufficient to communicate feeling clearly.

Alignment and Release

What exactly is this thing called *release*, and how may we achieve it? The muscles below and surrounding the lungs must not only be strong enough to support breath on the exhalation and in the act of “sounding,” but those muscles must also be allowed, when not in use, *to let go completely*. It is this utter relaxation of the muscles that protect our core that I term “release.”

When one realizes that in releasing the breath we make ourselves doubly vulnerable by exposing both our vital organs and our deepest, most hidden feelings, it is understandable that so many of us have difficulty releasing the breath. And yet that, I would venture to state, is the actor’s job: to expose that which ordinarily remains hidden.

We are quite used to protecting our guts. How much time each day do we sit hunched over in a car or in front of a computer screen utterly collapsed, unable to move our core muscles, and breathing only into the upper third of our lungs? When we get out into the world of other people, we walk on pavement, hard, even and for the most part unchanging, and we lock ourselves away, refusing to look at one another and to acknowledge not only one another’s existence, but that we all want so badly to protect ourselves. When we do look, it is in order to judge. Who looks good? Who wears their wealth? Who has a beautifully sculpted body? I am not talking only of young people, but I am speaking mostly of those with privilege, those who can spend money and time on body modification in order to fit into the morality of the dominant culture (Roach).

It's no wonder that people still come to the theatre: they want to see strangers who are willing to live in their skin, real or imagined, and reveal what is inside them.

Although I do believe this to be the greatest challenge facing most beginning actors, not everyone has difficulty with release. Many people who live what we might call a rural life – walking frequently over rough, uneven terrain, using their body in their work, and raising their heart rates for an extended period of time – these people release their breathing muscles completely. They do because they must. And they don't notice it at all. It is just a part of what they do in order to do the things they do.

There was a time before the industrial age, when the rural life was the norm. We have only to look at the writing and at accounts of oratory from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to imagine how much more suited people were to communicating long and often poetic thoughts. The rise of industrialism, global capitalism, and mass media has spread constricting habits and activities to many of even the most remote societies today. But I don't intend to spend ink lamenting a bygone era, only to point out that our lifestyle determines that which we are capable of.

So how might we help the present-day body find release of the breathing muscles and therefore greater access to breath? I think a very effective way is simply to engage in aerobic exercise. I don't mean to send our acting students to the gym three times a week for weight-training and body-sculpting, although regular lap-swimming would do wonders for a student's ability to breathe. What if the acting student's day began with a long, vigorous walk or even a run? Dare we ask students to run in present-day America,

where we have specialists who do that sort of thing for the viewing pleasure of the rest of us? We do not need to run fast. We do not need this exercise to create actors of a certain size and weight. We only need to get the blood pumping a little harder than normal and to keep it working at that rate for some time. The purpose of the exercise is simply to allow the involuntary respiratory system to work at peak performance level, whatever that level may be for each individual. This is very good for expanding the breath capacity, as well as for allowing for unconscious release of habitual tensions that keep us from breathing fully.

In my voice and speech classroom, we often play games or engage in exercises that are specifically intended to raise the heart rate and allow for greater exchange of breath in the body. This may be difficult for those of us teaching in less-than-desirable classroom spaces, in which the rooms are crowded with too many students, and the floors routinely give those students splinters. Jogging about the room with knees up is a favorite that I've stolen from Janet Rodgers's classroom. I have taken the jogging to new extremes by asking students to also raise their arms, then to raise the muscles of their faces (essentially to smile), and finally, at quite an advanced stage, to incorporate sound or even text while jogging with appendages extended.

Although the support of breath necessary to do this advanced exercise is considerable, in the initial stages I believe the truly significant moment of the exercise is immediately afterward when a student is allowed to "catch her breath." This is the moment of release. Even a student who has difficulty showing the flab of his belly may

in this moment need a complete release, a moment in which the belly is allowed to soften and hang out.

Another good game to get the breath dropped in and the heart rate up is called “Enemy & Guardian.” I believe I first played this game with twelve-year-olds at the Village Theatre in Issaquah, Washington. As an extra bonus, this game is also wonderful for creating a fully engaged group experience. And it is very fun.

While everyone is spread out around the room, ask each player to choose, silently and for themselves, one person in the room who will be their enemy. Next everyone chooses another person to be their guardian. The goal of the game is to keep your guardian between your enemy and yourself. When you say “Go!” everyone will run like crazy and laugh a lot. At a certain point, you may wish to yell, “Freeze!” When they have stopped, ask them to speak any text they have prepared or perhaps lead them in singing together. They should engage in the activity fully, speaking or singing in order to communicate to someone across the room. They will access deeper breath and perhaps more freedom in their voices than before the game began.

Really, the first semester of Voice and Speech training for the actor is spent focused *only* on release and support of the breath, with just the beginnings of discovering the free voice. Since attending Patsy Rodenburg’s workshop, I have put much greater focus on the student’s conscious awareness of releasing those habitual tensions in the body. In *The Actor Speaks*, Rodenburg frequently utilizes the pedagogical tool of teaching both the desired, released state of the body and its opposite, the locked, rigid, or

guarded body. By consciously placing tension in certain areas of the body, a student is better able to release that tension fully and note the reappearance of that habit when it inevitably returns.

Kristin Linklater, in *Freeing the Natural Voice*, focuses the actor on allowing his body to do what it does without attempting to control it. While I agree entirely with this approach, I think that until your body is allowed to discover the difference between what Rodenburg in her workshop referred to as “the way your body wants to stand,” that is, the way you exist in a body shaped by years of habitual tension, and the way your body feels and relates to its environment as it releases tension, frees your voice, and allows your emotions out, you may have a difficult time knowing what precisely you are attempting not to control. Nevertheless, Linklater’s switch from the active to the passive verb in thinking about breathing is a step in the right direction:

... the initial attitude to the breathing process that has been suggested is that the involuntary nervous system does it best. That, if you allow the breathing to tell you what it wants, you do not have to waste energy controlling or sustaining it consciously. That, the ultimate controls for the breath are thoughts and feelings. That, instead of sending active messages to yourself, such as “breathe in,” “breathe out,” “take a breath,” “inhalation,” “exhalation,” you send passive messages such as “allow the breath to replace,” “let the breath release,” “let the breath drop in,” or “fall out”

(*Freeing the Natural Voice* 33-4)

Opening the body to breath, “feeling the need” and “yielding to the need for

breath” (Linklater), is crucial for release of tension. When we ask a student to “take a breath,” they literally reach out with their bodies and grab that breath out of the air. It is a violent and unnecessary act that puts tension throughout their bodies. Instead, the act of inspiration need very simply be about getting out of the way, opening the respiratory passage, and allowing oneself to be filled with all the breath and energy needed.

Discovering and gauging release of tension in the body is something each of us must do for ourselves. It becomes a meditation. The syllabus of my introductory course draws this parallel further: “By embarking on vocal training for the stage, we agree to practice slowly, mindfully, and patiently. The work we do is personal; you are working on yourself alone. However, we work together in order to share and support each other in what might otherwise be a lonely practice” (Appendix B).

As we release tension in our body, we find that we breathe more deeply and more fully, and we gradually come to discover our body’s naturally strong and healthy alignment, one that may be unfamiliar and therefore uncomfortable at first. Over time and with much attention, this optimal alignment will come to be the normal posture, and the actor will marvel at his newfound freedom of expression and engagement with the world.

The following exercises are taken directly from Patsy Rodenburg, though I have tried these ideas in different ways elsewhere. They exist in several of her books, where I

first experienced her take on them. Engaging in them with Rodenburg cemented their significance in my mind and body.²

We begin with our connection to the Earth, our **feet**. Whether standing, walking, or running – what part of our foot takes the weight of our bodies? In a standing position, rock back on the heel. Feel how unstable you are, and note how your breathing changes. Now, lean forward over the ball of the foot. Lean too far, and feel the instability there. Finally, come back to rest over the ball of the foot, slightly more forward than back. In order to check-in with how the breath and voice corresponds to the change in your body, speak a line of text or simply count to five. Try it a few times, walking around the space in between stopping, re-centering, and speaking, always with the focus on the feet. As we check in with our bodies, breath, and voices we note how we feel and how we sound.

When we feel as though we've released any tension that we may have held in the feet or in a habitual way of standing, we move up to the **knees**. The knees have been a persistent problem for many of my students in the last two years, who habitually lock either one or both knees when standing. And again here we are helped by purposely locking the knees and then consciously releasing them. As we do, we may suddenly feel the breath drop deep into the gut. To try this, walk around the space vigorously, come to rest in a centered standing position, open to the breath, and speak or sing. Be aware of

² In her workshop, Rodenburg shrank from calling these exercises “her work” or “her method,” but rather thought of them just as common sense collected over a lifetime of listening to and working with other people’s voices. In the university setting, in which voice teachers are asked to justify abilities through certifications in certain “schools” of training (e.g. Linklater, Fitzmaurice, Lessac, etc.), the absence of ownership over these ideas is unheard of and quite refreshing. See also Kate Burke’s article entitled “On Training and Pluralism.”

the knees. If they want to lock or if you habitually lean on one leg, consciously lock them and release them then speak or sing again. Resume your walk around, again stopping, opening to the breath and speaking or singing. Listening to the thin, reedy sound created with locked knees (and the corresponding tension in the throat) and to the rich, easy sound created when those locked knees are released will give another measure of the release of tension and our newly free voice.

We arrive at our **belly**. If we hold tension in the body that prevents us from breathing fully, it is likely that this is where it lives and hides. Tension here is that which we discussed at length in the section on Release.

Many of us, men and women, wish only to show our bellies when we feel they have been properly worked at the gym. Unfortunately, overly sculpted abdominal muscles do nothing to help us breathe. In fact, they actually prevent us from using our breath fully because they hold the gut in, diminishing the amount of space that can be displaced by the breath. In other words, for the stage actor or singer, it is good to have a bit of flab! It allows for free movement of the diaphragm and maximum exchange of air in the body.

For women, this is an area of particular concern. How could it not be when the female body – and specifically the torso – is such a constant image in mass media? If any emotional or psychological issues from a student's past have not been dealt with, she may protect those locked away feelings in the belly – that is, she never fully releases those muscles because she is wary of letting down her guard.

For students who have difficulty letting go of the belly and using the diaphragm and other abdominal muscles to support sound, I recommend lying on the ground with the feet and knees up, perhaps on a chair, for an extended period of time. This can not only do wonders for releasing the breath, but it also can reveal intense emotion that an individual may not have realized was there. I have witnessed students in this position begin sobbing after five minutes, and five minutes later they are laughing uncontrollably. Releasing tension and locked-up emotion in the body takes time. A student may have breakthroughs, but those breakthroughs generally occur only with repeated practice. It is literally a meditation.

This semester, I met individually with a handful of students who were not realizing release in the belly and who could not consistently support their breath, and I recommended lying in this position for fifteen minutes each night just before going to bed. Not only has this method improved their abilities to support their breath and communicate clearly, many of the students have commented on a newfound ability to fall asleep easily and a much more restful night's sleep.

Having worked to release tension in the feet, knees, and belly, we can begin to concern ourselves with the **spine**. The back, of course, should be tall with a straight, extended spine, but that spine should always be flexible and not stiff or rigid. Common challenges here are a young woman's habitual hiding of the breasts by slumping the shoulders forward and curving the back, as well as the young man's tendency to throw the shoulders back and thrust the chest forward, causing a pinch where the ribs meet the

spine. People of either gender may find themselves erring on one side or the other, and like releasing the knees, it is useful to allow men and women to experience both the slump and the rigid spinal positions in order to then release to a loose, balanced center point.

Exercises useful for working our way up from the feet through the spine include the “Arm Swing and Drop,” which involves swinging the arms several times in a circle and then hanging them up overhead and dropping them completely. This exercise, done one arm at a time, releases muscular tension in the shoulders and lets them rest on their own. A personal favorite is the “Back of the Ribcage Release.” Reach across to hug yourself so that the fingers touch the shoulder blades and then drop over in this position. With the neck completely released and the knees unlocked, allow yourself to breathe right into that place where the ribs meet the spine. Finally, drop the arms and come up with the exhalation of breath, tucking the pelvis first and then stacking one vertebra at a time until the shoulders have dropped into place on their own and you have assumed your full height. A third and quite effective exercise, which I’ve called the “Swing and Soar,” begins by dropping over, releasing the neck and spine completely, and in one swift and easy motion swinging the arms overhead and then out like the wings of a soaring bird to finally drift down to the sides. This opens the chest and brings you into alignment. Now, walk around the space vigorously, come to rest in a centered standing position, open to the breath, and speak or sing. All of these exercises may be used by the actor who, having undertaken their personal voice check-in, finds themselves without

freedom in their body, breath, or voice.

Rodenburg's conception of circles of energy and focus are here quite useful, and I will refer the reader to her exercises on Finding Centre and States of Readiness on pages 28-35 of *The Actor Speaks*. Also her recently released book *The Second Circle* deals specifically with how anyone can engage more fully with the world.

Finally, we must proceed to the **neck**. The above exercises work well to free the neck, as long as you allow the muscles there to release while in the dropped over position. Easily stretching the neck down and over to one side and the other is quite helpful. The most important thing, however is allowing the head to live at the very top of the spine. The head weighs as much as a Thanksgiving turkey, and as a result any slump in the neck creates a massive amount of muscular work for the neck. This, of course, places tension right there surrounding the vocal folds where the breath meets the vibratory instrument. That excess tension can stretch the vocal chords and effectively create vocal power without putting supported breath beneath it. It is analogous to placing your thumb over the end of the garden hose to spray that plant on the other side of the pea patch. You can do it, but if rely upon it, your vocal folds and your thumb will get tired of doing all the work. Instead, we want to walk over the house and turn the spigot to give us more water pressure. That is our goal – freedom in the body and a powerful source of energy behind our words and actions.

In class, I have made a point to praise an actor who, perhaps for the first time, finds true presence onstage by releasing those tensions and breathing easily and fully.

Rodenburg, in working with one particularly tall actor at our workshop (who incidentally is a graduate of VCU's BFA Acting program), praised him when he finally let go of his everyday slump, allowed his breath to drop in, and stood at his full height. "Just look at him," she exclaimed. "He's magnificent!" And he was.

Support

Opposing the muscular action of release is support. One can imagine the two as one thing, one action, always in motion, like the *yin* and *yang* of two fish chasing each other. In "Breathing is Meaning," Catherine Fitzmaurice describes how the two work together:

"Inspiration" denotes both the physical act of breathing in, and the mental act of creating a thought. The expiration (breathing out) or expression of the thought is likewise both physical and mental. It is the harmonizing of these twin aspects of speaking – the physical needs and impulses and the mental thought processes – that I address, and through them the harmonizing of the two functions of the nervous system in the act of breathing for speaking: the autonomic (which is an unconscious response by the diaphragm to a need for oxygen) and the central (which can override autonomic respiratory rhythm through conscious motor control). The diaphragm contains both unstriated and striated muscle and is responsive to both the autonomic and central nervous systems. It is therefore uniquely appropriate as a site to create such harmony, so that the healing of the culturally prevalent body/mind split is not merely a metaphysical, but is actually a physical and obtainable

goal which brings impulse and thought together as
action.

(248)

Regular training to strengthen the breathing muscles is essential to the beginning actor or singer. It can be realized in many ways, from the running and swimming mentioned above to engaging in frequent singing or extended speech. What makes the actor or singer's training of breath different from an athlete's is the *need* for the actor or singer to communicate a thought vocally. Thus an exercise like the one described earlier in which I ask students to run in a circle with knees and arms up *and* speak or sing. As Fitzmaurice writes: "Speaking *requires* an *active* use of the outbreath during its role as exciter of vibration" (251).

I believe I may have first encountered this need as a tour guide at Cave of the Mounds in Blue Mounds, Wisconsin. From the age of fifteen, I taught the geology and history of Southwestern Wisconsin to groups of fifty in the echoing, dark underground for an hour at a time five times a day. As a singer, I was well prepared to take on this task. But the fact that I had a clear and present *need* to communicate information and the opportunity to practice frequently allowed my abilities to support my breath and effectively use my voice to grow.

For the classically-trained singer, breath support is ostensibly always being practiced. It is what creates a beautiful tone.³ For the actor or the singer accustomed to

³ Although, I have encountered many opera singers whose training has locked other parts of their bodies and made them unwilling or unable to move freely. Perhaps if actors and opera singers trained together, we could find a bridge between the art forms that would benefit both performers and the art forms as a whole. But that is an even bigger project than the one I am now proposing.

using a microphone, tricks can be developed to offset the need for support.

Unfortunately, those tricks utilize muscular tension to quicken the airstream – we are back to our garden hose analogy, and any voice produced this way will not have longevity. Thus, I feel an actor who is made to sing every day will gradually develop a powerful support system.

In *The Actor Speaks*, Rodenburg writes: “*Most vocal abuse is caused by not supporting the voice.* It is natural to use support. As you go off support you will feel that the whole vocal system constricts to preserve air” (46). By forcing the voice – which, in the case of the actor, most frequently occurs in attempting at all costs to be heard onstage – one never learns how to work without effort.

Janet Rodgers has developed a system of strengthening the support muscles and increasing the capacity that she calls the OxyRhythm Exercises. They are based in yoga, as well as the work of Moshé Feldenkrais, have some similarities to Pilates, and include a couple of traditional Tibetan exercises. Throughout the focus is on the breath. I have led my students in “oxyrhythms” nearly everyday for the last four semesters, and I can attest to the growth the exercises realize in even the weakest breathers. What’s more, they also contribute to the communal experience, which I feel I made the case for in chapter one. The Oxyrhythm Exercises are printed with permission in Appendix F.

I believe the key in developing support is not allowing the actor or singer to push. Rodenburg’s exercises in *The Actor Speaks* are an excellent way for the actor or the singer to develop support. They each begin with a necessary sense of ease and

centeredness that is a reminder not to strain or force.

In brief, begin by vocalizing on a light ‘s’, sending the sound out to a focal point just above eyeline. Note when you “fall off support” – usually at the end of your comfortable breath, when the temptation to squeeze the remaining air begins. Never work beyond the supported breath. But, simply recover and start again.

Next, move to a voiced sound – ‘z’ and begin again, always working just to the end of support before recovering. Pushing on a wall when vocalizing or holding a chair over the head also will help drop the breath all the way down to the gut and keep it supported for the duration of the vocalization. When trying the exercises for the first few times, it is useful to also try to work *without* support. This will make clear just how important using the support is and also how vocalization feels and sounds different with and without support.

Next, move into counting, working to add a number to each supported use of breath. Breathe. “One.” Breathe. “One, two.” Breathe. “One, two, three.” Breathe. “One, two, three, four.” And so on working as far as you are able while still remaining on support. This exercise can also be accomplished with the unvoiced ‘s’ or the voiced ‘z’ by simply counting the seconds. Begin with five seconds, breathe, next try ten seconds, breathe, fifteen, et cetera. Eventually, a sound will be supported for thirty or more seconds in this way.

Next, try a full recovery of breath on a ‘z’ or ‘v’ sound. Release the supported sound as long as you can, recover the breath and immediately try it again – always

working with an aligned body, allowing ease in the throat, and going only as far as the supported breath will take you. Always let it go just before loss of support. After you've completed a second breath, recover, and try a third. As you get more fit continue to add more.

In the next exercise, we work with either a voiced or unvoiced sound or simply by counting over a changing amount of time. When leading a class through this exercise, I will call out the number to be counted or sounded through as the recovery inhalation is happening. The count wants to vary widely – Five, breath, twelve, breath, three, breath, twenty-five, breath, eight..." The point of the exercise is to begin to develop a responsiveness to the particular needs of a given text or circumstance, in which the amount of breath necessary may change greatly from moment to moment due to the lines spoken, the movement required, the lyrics sung, or the emotion released.

We are ready to do the above exercises on vowel sounds. This begins work on freeing the voice itself and essentially moves us into Rodenburg's next set of exercises, through page 81 of *The Actor Speaks*. Begin with 'oo' and move gradually to 'ah', visiting 'oh', 'ee', and 'eh' in between. The temptation to push the sound as the vowel opens more and more will be great. We must always try to work with ease and not to push.

Much of what we are doing now *is, in fact, singing*. Having accomplished all of the above, we now can work with changes in loudness – soft, loud, and increasing the volume from soft to loud in a crescendo and from loud to soft in a diminuendo. Perhaps

the most difficult thing we can do is this last exercise. But if intensity of support can be maintained as the sound moves over a count of twenty or thirty seconds to a very quiet level of volume, then the performer is truly working at a very advanced level and the release and support of breath is in place.

Work with the breath must, of course, continue. A few days of inactivity is enough to send us off our game. But having achieved this level of surrender to and control of the breath, we are ready for the next step.

3. The Speaking-Singing Connection

The voice is happiest when it is allowed to play...

Joan Melton (xiii)

What exactly is the connection between the singing voice and the speaking voice? Why do many of us feel that we have one but not the other? For that matter, why do some of us feel we don't have either? Don't we all have just one voice, one body, one instrument that is capable of making hundreds, thousands, an infinite number of sounds? I believe we do. But how to get at the connection between the two – that is the challenge before us.

The first thing that must be said to the actor who is faced with singing and is fearful of the prospect is that *singing need not sound beautiful*. I realize I may be asking for a fight from some readers, but I contend that singing only need be *appropriate* to the style, the story, the character, and the situation. That may mean it does not need to be the “best” sound possible. That best possible sound may be completely inappropriate for a given theatrical performance. Having stated this, I want also to suggest that if the sound

of the voice is free and the breath is supported, it needs only to find its acoustical focus to have clarity. This clarity is likely to resemble beauty.

If that alone does not alleviate the fears of many actors, then I will go on to point out that in my view the two biggest differences between speaking and singing are the duration of the sounds we make and our control of pitch. Kevin Robison, in his very accessible handbook *The Actor Sings*, describes several good exercises that reveal “how singing really is a sustained form of speech” (34). I encourage students of music theatre to utilize his text.

Extended, sustained sounding is an early part of the actor’s voice and speech training. As we work with the breath, much of our time is spent sustaining sounds in order to practice and build support. When we advance to utilizing changes in loudness of our extended sounds, we are getting closer and closer to something that most people would call singing. We are already “phrasing” our sound – giving it meaning in the way that we use loudness and intensity.

Patsy Rodenburg includes several exercises in *The Actor Speaks* that ask the reader to “intone” sounds or words. Although that particular word may be strange to many of my students, what Rodenburg is getting at is a bridge from speaking to singing. Intoning is just what I’ve described above: sustained sound. You could think of it as chanting. Or if you utilize a variety of pitches, we understand it simply as singing.

As a way to introduce the notion of intoning, Rodenburg writes:

I realize that singing is, on one level, a very technically complex activity. Yet it is more natural than speaking. It

has a fluency and a free flow that should be fun and more liberating than speaking text. This free flow has been stifled by very rigid notions of note, placing the voice, timing and the type of voice you have. The potentially joyous side of singing has been corseted with judgemental fears.

I only mention this here by way of introducing some simple exercises to bridge the spoken voice into the singing one. You must try to do the exercises without too much worry about your ability to sound a note, whether your singing voice is good or fits a fashionable aesthetic. As long as you stay free and supported, all will be well.

(The Actor Speaks 137-8)

Begin by intoning or chanting a text. After intoning for a lengthened amount of time, in the middle of the thought on the same breath and utilizing *the same energy*, move directly into speaking the text. The goal initially is to keep the same sort of energy throughout – to literally connect the intoning and speaking through the connection of the thought. The second thing to become aware of is any change in the quality of the sound as you move from intoning into speaking. Do the vowels seem to drop back into the throat when you shift into speaking? Finally, listen particularly to the pitch. How does it change as you transition from singing into speaking? Does the pitch drop?

Having posited these questions, begin again with the goal of maintaining the energy, quality, and pitch of the sound as you shift from intoning into speaking. This may take quite a lot of repetition. Give yourself a focal point that is up and out. It is especially useful if that focal point is another person and you are attempting to change

them in some way with this thought.

Now, having chanted or intoned our way through the text, it is time to fully sing it. If the material is a song you know, this is easily done. If it is text that is not set to music, then make it up – but make it expressive and fun to sing. After singing a few lines, move into intoning and then finally into speaking, again keeping the same energy, quality of tone, and general pitch range, and making sure to bridge the transitions on the same breath.

Lastly, remove the intoning phase of this exercise, and move from singing directly into speaking on one breath and using one voice. As Rodenburg says, “Both singing and speaking should feel equally filled” (*The Actor Speaks* 138).

She calls going in the opposite direction – speaking into singing – Going up the Mountain. Here the actor-singer has both a non-musical text and a song to work with, although for the advanced student one text (either musical or non-musical) will suffice.

Rodenburg’s exercise in full:

Take up your text. Speak it and before you have time to freeze on the thought (again, doing it on the same breath will help) move into intoning the text. The voice might shift in pitch or placing, but keep it free and focus up and out, not worrying about the sound that you produce.

Now speak, intone, then improvise a tune with the text. Now cut out the intoning. Speak and go straight into an improvised song on the text. Now speak the text, sing the text and sing your song. Both should feel equally full.

Now let’s sweep the voice in all directions. Speak, then intone into singing a song. Sing a song, intone a text, then speak it. Sing a song straight into speaking a

text. Speak a text straight into singing a song. With repetition, all these transitions will start to feel seamless. As this happens dramatically on-stage, the audiences will know that a greater intensity is occurring, but without observing the technical shifts which will suspend their disbelief in the story you are telling.

(The Actor Speaks 139)

There is one word that needs defining now, and that word is a rather slippery one. It is “placement.”

Resonance

Any discussion of the placement of sound is really one of resonance. It seems to be somewhat confusing. As I’ve spoken of the concept of placement in the past, some of my students have seemed to believe I was teaching them occult matters. I personally don’t recall ever having trouble focusing my sound forward and sending it out, and I attribute that to a childhood of singing and listening to the very resonant voices of my parents.

I think, though, what may be confusing to students is a lack of understanding regarding the instrument they have and how it actually functions. Very simply, as a sound-making device, the body is:

1. A power source, like an air compressor – the lungs powered by the diaphragm and the external and internal intercostals (connecting the ribs to one another)

on the inhalation, and on the exhalation by the abdominal muscles: rectus abdominis (in front), internal and external obliques (connecting to the rib cage diagonally), and the transversus abdominis (wrapping sideways around the abdomen).

2. A phonator or oscillator that breaks up the air into sound pressure waves, like the double reed of an oboe – the vocal folds in which sound is actually created.
3. A resonator or filter that amplifies and changes the specific quality or timbre of the sound, like the body of a guitar – the vocal tract, comprised of the spaces of the larynx, the pharynx (throat), the mouth, and the nasal passages. This filter is where articulation occurs and sound is broken into meaning, utilizing the jaw, teeth, lips, tongue, and palate.

What makes an animal's vocal instrument truly astounding is its mutability and responsiveness to impulse. At each step along the way – supporting the breath, vocalizing, and resonating or articulating – the mechanisms can change in a wide variety of ways, and they do so instantaneously as a reaction to our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions.

Technically, the resonator is everything from the neck up. This is the beginning of the confusion with placement. We imagine resonating from our chest, and we feel in our lower tones our ribs vibrating. They *are* vibrating, but I believe the best way to

consider this is to think of the sympathetic strings of a Hardanger fiddle – the bow does not touch them, and yet they “ring” and vibrate with the strings being played just centimeters above. In this way, our whole body is a resonator. But our sound is not “placed” in our belly or our chest. Sound, created at the vocal folds and borne on the breath, is manipulated and given meaning utilizing the vocal, oral, and nasal spaces and obstructions. We want to bring the focus of our sound to that place where it seems to travel out to the world most easily – this is what we mean when we say “forward placement.”

When we sing, because we are sustaining sounds, the tone is continuously sent forward along the journey of our breath. This is also true in speech, but because speech sounds are often chopped up and not elongated, that forward motion is less obvious. Therefore, singing is a useful tool enabling the actor to learn to control resonance and articulation.

“Placing the sound” then is allowing the sound to resonate fully in the neck and head and launching it – sound and sense – into space toward the object of the speaker or singer’s intent. And now that we may understand what placement is, it is incumbent upon us to work toward forward placement, not only because Patsy Rodenburg says we should, but because *we can hear the difference* between a sound that is alive and colored by all the qualities that our vibrating body can give and one that is stuck in the back of the mouth and therefore dull. The former sound I will continue to listen to all night long, and the latter I’ve given up on after five minutes.

When we are in our dropped over position, ridding the body of our habitual tensions, and freeing up the breath and voice, we may also begin to wake up the resonances with some gentle humming in our higher registers. Gravity seems to work well in making the face and head vibrate even more than usual in this position. When we come up, a nice facial massage, working all the way around the jaw, tongue, and neck to free up any tension there will also help to bring our sounds even more forward.

Vocal sirens are very useful for connecting the registers of the voice and also for connecting speaking and singing.⁴ Rodenburg's "Cascade" exercise, in which a hum begins to siren down from the head, washing over the forehead, and finally, as the lips begin to tickle, is released on an extended "ha" at any pitch that comes out (usually one higher than the familiar speaking pitch).

I have encountered several students this year who have not been able to reliably access their head register. For these students, continuing to practice forward placement through the dropped over position and singing siren sounds up through their heads is essential for opening up their head resonances. Until they are able to do so, their speaking and singing will remain somewhat dull and not engage the listener.

In the practice of my own voice, I have noticed that the lower in my range that I bring my falsetto, the higher I can sing in my chest register and the more connected and

⁴ "It is practical to think of registers as different thickness settings of the vocal folds. [...] In chest register, the vocal folds are relatively thick and taut; the muscles inside the vocal folds, the thyroarytenoids (TA for short), are contracted, which bulks up/firms up the vocal folds. Falsetto register voicing can be used for the upper-middle to topmost pitches. In falsetto register, there is little or no contraction of the thyroarytenoid, so the folds are thinner and less bulky. Only the surface mucosa of the vocal folds vibrates" (Melton 41).

bright my whole voice seems to be.

Embarking again on Rodenburg's exercise "Speaking into Singing," we focus on the color, the brilliance of tone, and the clarity of thought to send our sound and sense out. And here a traditional singer's warm-up of scales will help to open up the resonances, bridge the transitions between registers within our range, and make the voice feel good.

The Singer's Formant

There is another way to think about resonance in the voice, and that is by considering the science of acoustics. When discussing resonance and optimal sound, today many singing teachers talk about *formants*, as does Richard Miller in *Solutions for Singers*:

A formant is an area of acoustic strength that results from the cumulative distribution of upper partials (also known as harmonics or overtones). A formant results from the acoustic multiple of the fundamental pitch that originates at the level of the larynx, in response to shapes of the resonator tract, thereby producing regions of prominent acoustic energy distribution.

(73)

This is a new area of research for me, and one in which I will delve much more deeply in the future. However, for about the last eight years I have been practicing a form of overtone singing that originates in the Republic of Tuva in Central Asia. I can speculate, based on this practice, that by learning how to focus the harmonics inherent in a pitch, one could sing clearly with very little effort at all.

My speculation appears to be corroborated by Gillyanne Kayes. In a chapter entitled “Twang, the singer’s formant” from her very detailed book *Singing and the Actor*, Kayes writes:

What voice trainers and singers call resonance is a form of sound filtering. Each part of the vocal tract (the tube of the larynx, the nose, the mouth and the pharynx) has its own resonating frequency. Harmonics that are close to the resonance frequencies of the vocal tract will get stronger, and others will be damped. The peaks of energy in these harmonics are known as ‘formants’. Formants enable us to identify difference between a whispered ‘EE’ and ‘OO’. The singer’s formant is based on this principle and on how the ear hears.

The ear canal also has its own resonating frequency. When this range of frequencies are present in a note, the ear canal resonates in sympathy with them. This is one of the secrets of effortless projection: when the ear hears twang, it comes out to meet you!

(110)

If this kind of acoustical focusing can be accomplished by singers, and we seek to discover the connecting voice, the complete voice that is capable of an infinite number of vocal expressions, then surely actors would also be served by thinking about resonance in this way.

4. Call and Response

It takes two to know one.

Gregory Bateson (Nachmanovitch 94)

There is something so gloriously freeing in knowing that you don't have to come up with it all, that someone else may actually be leading, and that all you have to do is get lost in answering that call.

In the performing arts, we practice art forms that we share with many artistic ancestors, tens of thousands of years of ancestors, a few living and many deceased. Even when *I* am the one leading – teaching a class, directing a show, or perhaps singing a song – I know that in the long lineage of performance, what I am doing has been done before. It is a call from the ages, from time out of time that I answer. Joseph Roach, also responding to the call, has this to say:

“The paradox of the restoration of behavior resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance. In this improvisatorial behavioral space, memory reveals itself as

imagination”

(*Cities of the Dead* 29).

Call and response has probably been a part of ritual performance since before there was language. Even preceding spoken language, there was the breath and vocalized sound and the *need to communicate*. It is easy to participate in the response – easy even to lead the call – you just have to commit to the present moment and you have to keep going. Best of all it is an affirmation. Through the call and the response we proclaim and affirm our group identity and offer our trust in the leader’s representation of the group.

When we train the voice or the body, we often create a routine that we can then always refer back to and continue to grow with. It is a comfort and ideally *does* physically and mentally transform the self over time. What Roach has to offer us, though, is the idea that every time our routine, our call and response, is enacted, it is new – but not *new* new, rather new *again*. It is a misremembrance and therefore a reinvention.

Our call and response is an opportunity. When we learn a song in my classes (and we try to learn a new one every couple of weeks), I teach by call and response. We don’t look at a page. We don’t look at a chalkboard. We look at one another, and we breathe together. No one is expected to know the song, save for me. It does not matter if people do not learn it perfectly. The important step is the one that moves us forward – the act of commitment, using the breath, pronouncing the word, keeping time and pitch

as best we can. We enter into the new moment sharing a song that has been sung many thousands of times before, but never quite like the present moment.

Listening and Imitation

Entering into the present moment in a group setting requires such exquisite listening. All ears must give over to the present environment – and not just our ears, but our whole selves. This is precisely the kind of listening that is required of actors and musicians when performing. How do we teach it? By practicing.

Any art that relies upon responsiveness to impulse is an art that relies upon breath, for what else responds so instantaneously to the thought and the feeling. In one of my favorite books on creativity, entitled *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts*, Stephen Nachmanovitch writes:

... everyday speech is a case of improvisation. More than that, it's a case of shared improvisation. You meet someone new and you create language together. There is a commerce of feeling and information back and forth, exquisitely coordinated. When conversation works, it is, again, not a matter of meeting halfway. It is a matter of developing something new to both of us.

Our listening skills must be tuned. There are many ways to go about this, but one very useful place to start is meditation. By isolating one's concentration to the breath and the individual sounds in the practitioner's awareness, one may begin to hear things that are usually lost in the wash of aural stimulus that is our world. In my Vocal Storytelling class, we took a class period to attempt this meditative tuning to the world.⁵

We began with the room's air conditioner, the foundational sonic presence of the space. (Air circulation systems are a wonderful place to begin because we so often don't hear them at all. They are "white noise.") After listening for some time, I asked the group to begin humming to match the air conditioner – to find the "tonic" note. This was easily done, even though the sound was one that few people in the room were aware of before I turned their attention to it.

In my undergraduate days in the early 1990s at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, I had the good fortune to sing in the Concert Choir under the watchful eyes and exceptional ears of Dr. Robert Fountain. I was in his final choir the last two years of his teaching. The year following his retirement he passed away. He was in his eighties. The experience of singing with him had a profound affect on me in several ways, one of which was in developing attention to the specific nuances of musical pitch.

⁵ The title of this class came to be a misnomer, I'm afraid. During the semester that I taught it, I had several interested people ask me how the class on storytelling was going. I came to realize that no one had the foggiest notion what "Vocal Storytelling" was – and nor did I, really. What people knew about the class is that it had "storytelling" in the title, and they assumed, as anyone naturally would, that I was teaching a course on oral traditions of passing down stories – a topic well worth teaching, but not what I was teaching at the time. In future, the class will be called "Experimental Vocalization in Deviced Theatre" or something like that.

When we gathered to our places to begin rehearsal, Dr. Fountain would come to his stool before us, lean back onto it, and place his fist to his mouth. As his bright eyes glanced about the room, taking us all in, we all began to blow through our fists. We were making our first deliberate contact with our breath, very much like Rodenburg's recovery breath on a light 's' sound, and we were doing so as a communal experience in a ritual fashion. I have continued to use blowing through the fist to easily wake up the support system of the breath. In fact, this is precisely how I began the Vocal Storytelling class each day.

The next thing Dr. Fountain did at the beginning of each rehearsal was to ask for a B flat. He would bring his hand up, and when the ictus came down, without fail, sixty voices hummed a perfect B flat. How did we do it?

When I began with the choir, I was a little timid in finding my B flat; I certainly did not want to be the only B natural in a sea of perfect B flats. But quite soon, I was able to commit easily and fully, letting myself surrender to the group experience. What changed? Had I learned perfect pitch or was my pitch memory just that good? Nothing of the sort. It was the fluorescent lighting.

I have no idea if Dr. Fountain realized that those lightbulbs hummed at exactly that pitch and as a result asked for a B flat because he knew we'd be able to come up with it, or if he just *felt* like a B flat when he entered the room. In either case, consciously or subconsciously, the degree of attention paid to the details of the sonic environment is remarkable. I feel he exhibited great wisdom in beginning our rehearsals

in a way that brought us together and gave us a feeling of accomplishment.

Once the basis of the sonic environment is discovered, one can begin to pick out the harmonics – the overtones that exist within the initial sound. The sound of an air conditioner, even if that sound has a strong tonic pitch, will have many pitches in it. Some of those pitches will produce common overtones, which you will hear when you begin to focus on them. Singing with Dr. Fountain, who was such a stickler for pitch,⁶ the choir would often be in such good tune that we’d find the beautiful, high harmonic – the “ghost note” – that would complete the chord. He loved that.

Listening in such a focused way helps students to play with their voices because they begin to hear the richness of sounds. With this new level of perception and control, as students begin to sing or speak chorally, they start to learn both how to manipulate their sounds to “blend” and also to differentiate their sounds so that the richness – and by that I mean the particular resonance of the vibrating frequencies – complements, but retains an individuality. Because of the “long line” and connectedness of sustained sounds, I believe singing is a good way to practice this kind of “resonance play.”

On a practical level, I feel all actors should have a good ear for pitch. This is just common sense, really. Though it is not at all the focus of this treatise, obviously a good actor who can sing well will work with more frequency than another who is, as I sometimes hear, “not a singer.”

⁶ Once, when the choir was on tour, rehearsing in a lovely Catholic church outside of Minneapolis, Dr. Fountain stopped rehearsal abruptly and in a state of great gravitas unbuttoned his shirt to reveal a T-shirt that I and a friend in the choir had given him. On it was emblazoned a skull and crossbones and the words, “Tune it or Die!”

I currently have a student who is what some might call “tone-deaf.” I get a little worked up when I hear this phrase. It is so improperly used and so unforgiving. I don’t have the medical background required to describe true tone-deafness. I believe it may exist, but it does not appear nearly as frequently as people claim.

My student is certainly not tone-deaf; what he *is* is “tone-afraid.” He is one of the unfortunate people who early on was told not to sing, and so he has hidden his singing voice ever since. He does, however, *enjoy* singing. I have encouraged him in class to sing his heart out, and he seems to have no problem with this. For that, I am very glad. This great courage is his first step in learning to match pitch.

Joseph Anthony Foronda, writing in the Foreword to Kevin Robison’s *The Actor Sings*, pinpoints the challenge of matching pitch that he undertook when he, already a musician at the time, learned how to sing:

I could tell when I was playing my clarinet out of tune,
I could tell when other singers were not matching pitch,
but I had no idea how to do it with my own voice.

I would soon discover that matching pitch was not just a matter of *hearing* tones correctly, it was also about knowing how to physically produce them. This meant developing a sense of trust – trust in my teacher and myself. With each repetition I found more and more connections to what the process really meant. I had to *allow* my voice to be released confidently.

(ix-x)

Thus, listening is only a part of it. Imitating what is heard is sometimes the larger struggle. To face this uphill battle requires as much patience as can be mustered. It takes

a willingness to experiment and to enjoy that play time. And it takes repetition, repetition, repetition.

To this end, a portion of the daily singing warm-up should include pitch-matching and interval training using solfege (Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do). I credit my father with teaching me to use familiar songs to teach note relationships. For instance, “Here comes the bride...” begins on the tonic note and moves up the scale to the perfect fourth, or using solfege, from Do to Fa – “Here (Do) comes (Fa) the bride.” The sound of your mother’s voice calling you into dinner, “Bi-lly, it’s time for dinner,” uses the minor third. Notated with numbers: “Bi (m3)- lly (1), it’s (1) time (m3) for (1) di (m3)- nner (1).” The major sixth starts off “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean.” “Bali Hai” begins with an octave leap up then slips down a half step to a major seventh above the starting note. Learning intervals in this way is fun and memorable. Once you’ve got “Bali Hai” in your ear, it’s hard to get it out.

Another very effective way to get a group to begin to understand and relish the relationships between notes is to make chords, transitioning from one to next by manipulating the various parts. I will usually begin with the bass and soprano singing the same note two octaves apart, the tenor takes the fifth above the bass, and the alto sings the third of the chord. Everyone sings, “ah – eh – ee – oh – oo” with the bass and soprano holding the same note straight through, the tenor moving up two whole steps and then back down to where he began, and the alto moving on the “ee” up a whole note and then back down on the “oo.” Once people have the gist of this and are feeling

comfortably warm in their voices, I like to begin to manipulate the chord in new and interesting ways, adding suspensions and leading tones, changing keys, finding dissonance and resolution. It is, indeed, live group music composition.

Working with animal sounds and dialects is another way to do this work. In this way not only are we listening for and imitating pitch relationships, but we are also working on timbre, the particular quality of the sound. This takes us directly into building character using the voice and gives us more access to an even wider variety of expression with which to reveal the meaning and feeling. As we continue to elongate the sounds of speech into singing, the choices we make regarding character and especially dialect become clearer and clearer.

In the call and response of sung music, both sacred and secular, we practice breathing together and active listening and imitation. When we move from singing into speaking with this same sense of sharing the breath and actively responding to our partner, we suddenly have exciting, compelling “real life” on stage.

5. Musicality

To fashion music-making and singing on the stage into a credible, convincing, and absolutely essential human statement: this must always be the primary task.

Walter Felsenstein (Fuchs 62)

The goal of realizing the unity of theatre and music on stage has its obvious manifestation in opera. However, this treatise is intended for actors and teachers of acting; the opera is not our main focus. Both actors and singers have the same challenge when it comes to stage performance: being “in the moment” while pretending to be someone we are not.

Legendary opera director Walter Felsenstein made his life’s work the realization of a *musiktheater* in which the two art forms came together in a realistic way. The term “realistic” may seem to be at odds with a necessarily heightened form of expression, and yet, as Peter Paul Fuchs states in the introduction of his book compiling Felsenstein’s writings:

This plot must be unconditionally believable, or
 “realistic.” [...] A “realistic” plot in the sense of the
 music theater is not necessarily one that happens to
 people we might know, or that could happen right here
 and now; it is merely one that is *believable on its own*
terms.

(Fuchs xiv)

In our striving to be where we are and nowhere else, while also embodying the double life that is the actor at work, music can be grounding to us and to the audience. Felsenstein points out the necessity of this, stating, “The characters appearing in the operas are, of course, not singers; they are human beings who in unusual situations can only express themselves through singing” (Fuchs 133).

We need to be grounded in the reality of our world on stage, whatever that world may be. Even when the form our performance takes is not one in which singing is a natural outgrowth of intensifying emotion (as it is in opera or musical theatre), even then a sense of “musicality” in the performer may be just the thing to root her in the present and create a compelling performance. There are two things I mean by musicality: rhythm and melody.

Rhythm

Anyone who handles language professionally must have rhythm in their being. This is the beginning of music – a sense of time. Although there are different worldviews and philosophies of existence, many people agree that our world is sequential, and that theatre, even when created in an episodic or abstracted format, is sequential. Without a clear and flexible facility of time in the breath and the body, a performer is unable to realize the basic grounding element of life.

How does one discover rhythm? Most of us have it naturally, but many of us trip when we feel the pressure of attention on us. Thus, rhythm needs to be practiced frequently. For the actor who uses text in his work, this means reading aloud and reciting memorized text often. Patsy Rodenburg advocates keeping Chaucer, Donne, and Milton by the toilet - anything that you enjoy and that is challenging will do.

Singing, too, is an excellent way to practice keeping time, and my favorite way to do this in the voice and speech classroom is to sing rounds – a song with multiple parts that begins with one group, a second starting at the beginning when the first group has reached the second section of the music, the third joining in when the first has reached the third section and the second group has reached the second section of music, and so on. Once a song is learned in our call and response fashion, turning that unison song into a round adds the greater challenge of holding to one's own part while also keeping time. The “call” gets passed from the teacher’s hands to a small group within the

ensemble, and that first group is quickly followed by the “response” from the next group. Once all singers have begun, the challenge is to continue to keep time and breathe as one. When singers look across the circle to one another, passing the lyric back and forth, breathing together, and keeping time together, they begin a game of chase. Who is following whom?

My favorite round to use in class is “Come Follow,” a seventeenth century composition by John Hilton:

Come follow, follow, follow,

Follow, follow, follow thee.

Wither shall we follow, follow, follow?

Wither shall we follow, follow thee?

To the Greenwood, to the Greenwood,

To the Greenwood, Greenwood tree.

There are thousands of rounds from many cultures all of which are perfectly appropriate for exercising and bringing the voice out in an enjoyable way. But, how may we truly root that sense of rhythm in the body? By giving ourselves the freedom to move.

Eurhythmics

I first encountered what we today call “Eurhythmics” in Dr. Fountain’s Concert Choir at the University of Wisconsin. I had never before heard of the inventor of Eurhythmics, Swiss composer and teacher Emile Jaques-Dalcroze. How he came to originate this pedagogical method was not explained to me at the time. What I learned from this encounter was that by moving the body in time to music one may discover how to root the self more deeply in the breath and in the thought or feeling contained within the music and text.

We were working on one of the Bach motets, I believe *Lobet den Herrn, alle Heiden*. The normal risers had been cleared from the room leaving space for each group of singers to stand in their own circle. As Dr. Fountain started us off, in the order of entrances first the sopranos, then the altos, the tenors, and finally the basses began to step the rhythm of our vocal lines. This seemed very silly at first, and inspired wide grins and laughter throughout the room. Imagine four separate circles stepping in their own time – tiny, quick steps for eighth notes; long, slow steps for whole notes. Viewed from above, it might have appeared like the inner workings of a blender or some other machine.

Once we understood how the music was to be manifested in our bodies, we began to sing our parts as we stepped. The first thing I discovered was that music must always have forward motion in the body. A long sustained note cannot stop in the

middle of the line, but rather the breath, supported by the muscles of the diaphragm, must always continue moving the thought and feeling forward. In this way it became obvious that singing is both a full-body experience and also about communicating to a listener, an intended target.

In addition to these realizations about breath and music in the individual, I also found that when the group was working well together, embodying the music fully, the result was much more *expressive*. This is precisely what Jaques-Dalcroze set out to accomplish when he created his pedagogical method more than a century ago. In *Rhythm, Music and Education*, Jaques-Dalcroze describes the impetus behind his work:

... the musical progress of a certain number of pupils, whose ear developed at normal speed, appeared to me to be retarded by an incapacity to estimate with any exactitude variations of time and rhythmic grouping. The mind perceived the variations, but the vocal apparatus was unable to give effect to them. I came to the conclusion that the motive and dynamic element in music depends not only on the hearing, but also on another sense. Presently, however, a study of the reactions produced by piano-playing, in parts of the body other than the hands – movements with the feet, etc. – led me to the discovery that musical sensations of a rhythmic nature call for muscular and nervous response to the whole organism.

(xiii)

Eurhythmics was an important part of the Vocal Storytelling class. We took the experience of singing rounds to the next level by singing and stepping them in parts,

creating a kaleidoscope of concentric circles moving in opposite directions. The view from the top surely must have been a Busby Berkeley movie musical extravaganza!

Variations attempted on stepping and singing included stepping only with the meter of the song – that is, on the *beat*. The following notation indicates the left (L) or right (R) foot stepping forward with the sung word:

L R L R

Come follow, follow, follow,

L R L R

Follow, follow, follow thee.

L R L R

Wither shall we follow, follow, follow?

L R L R

Wither shall we follow, follow thee?

L R L R

To the Greenwood, to the Greenwood,

L R L R

To the Greenwood, Greenwood tree.

We tried taking half as many steps:

L R

Come follow, follow, follow,

L R

Follow, follow, follow thee.

L R

Wither shall we follow, follow, follow?

L R

Wither shall we follow, follow thee?

L R

To the Greenwood, to the Greenwood,

L R

To the Greenwood, Greenwood tree.

We also stepped on every sung *note*, as I had learned to do with the Bach motet:

L R L R L R L

Come follow, follow, follow,

L R L R L R L

Follow, follow, follow thee.

L R L R L R L R L R

Wither shall we follow, follow, follow?

L R L R L R L R L

Wither shall we follow, follow thee?

L R L R L R L R

To the Greenwood, to the Greenwood,

LR LR L R L R L

To the Greenwood, Greenwood tree.

Note in particular that “To” and “the” in the very last phrase receive two steps each because the melodic line is a run of eighth notes. In this way each *note* is moved with the body and not only each word.

In addition to these several ways of stepping this particular song, we also tried moving from one way to next with each repetition of the song. Because we were singing this in round, each group would change to the new way of stepping in the circle when they finished and began again, thus exaggerating the kaleidoscopic effect I mentioned earlier. We also did our Eurhythmics in rows, moving from one end of the room to the other, in long, snaking lines that traveled throughout the room, and finally in a completely independent, free fashion. The intent was always to move the voice and the music, through the body and the breath, forward. In this I believe we succeeded, and we had fun doing so.

Melody

In chapter three of this thesis, “The Speaking-Singing Connection,” we discussed the move from speaking into singing and back again, and the use of chanting or intoning as an intermediary step between the two. To make the leap all the way to singing – and not just to singing, but to really communicating using singing – one needs a strong sense of melody. This is not only for singers, though. I would argue that to speak in a truly engaging way, one also must have the melodic sensibility.

What is this sensibility, and why is it appealing? When a speaker’s voice is referred to as “melodic” or “lyrical,” it is enjoyable to listen to because of its easy access to a wide range of pitches and because of the speaker’s ability to link those pitches or notes together in a way that expressively (and perhaps dramatically) communicates meaning.

In order to train our ability to incorporate melody we need to practice extending our voice’s range beyond the three or four notes regularly used by the American speaker. Patsy Rodenburg’s “Cascade” exercise mentioned in chapter three is quite effective for this. I have also mentioned that my own training of my falsetto voice, extending it *down* rather than just up, has helped my “chest” voice to be able to rise comfortably in pitch. Working the range in our speech as well as our singing requires daily work. Our spoken range will expand most quickly when our practice takes place not only in the rehearsal studio, but also in our everyday conversations.

Finally, the expressive voice, the persuasive voice, the voice we find compelling is one that can phrase a thought clearly. This is true both in singing and speaking.

Thomas Hemsley in *Singing and Imagination* quotes Sergius Kagen on this topic:

A singer who cannot recite a song text with proper conversational inflection (that is, in a manner where the logic of the sentence is clearly presented to the listener, where punctuation is observed, where words of greater importance received greater emphasis) cannot hope to learn to phrase a song. Phrasing of most vocal music is based upon the meaning of a sentence, and its effect upon the inflection with which one recites this sentence and sings the corresponding musical part.

(117)

Also quoted in Hemsley is Manuel García, Jr. from his 1894 publication *Hints on Singing*:

The pupil must read the words of the piece again and again till the finest shadow of meaning has been mastered. He must next recite them with perfect simplicity and self-abandonment. The accent of truth apparent in the voice when speaking naturally is the basis of expression in singing. Light and shade, accent,

sentiment, all become eloquent and persuasive. The imitation of instinctive impulse must, therefore be the object of this special preparation.

(117)

If, as we hope, the voice has been grounded in the breath and is free and responsive to the inner workings of the mind and soul, then the clear phrasing of speech is the natural outward expression of those inner workings.

I have found that many of my students break up the line when they speak, confusing the sense of the speech. Addressing this issue, Joan Melton writes, “A critical first step in learning to sing, as in learning to phrase spoken material, is the ability to really connect one note or word to another” (68). I think that by asking the student to sing their text, they may more readily discover a melodic sense of phrasing that will carry the meaning of the text forward and rid them of the habitual need to break up the line with confusing sounds or pauses for thinking.

Verse

Once students have incorporated all the preceding work, they are ready to tackle verse. Shakespeare’s metrical poetry is ideal material to work on integrating the released, supported breath, the free and expressive voice, and the tuned resonance. With

the inclusion of choral singing as a part of the curriculum up to this point, the student-actor has found courage within the ensemble and easily leads and follows with a sense of rhythm and melody. The use of movement tied to the rhythm of the performance material has freed the thought and grounded it within what Patsy Rodenburg, in her book *Speaking Shakespeare*, calls “the givens” that comprise the world contained within Shakespeare’s words.

When I begin Shakespeare with students, I start with the *iambic*, the unit of breath that all else is based upon. We discover the rhythm of the texts in relationship to this constant heartbeat. Where does a character speak in perfect measure? Where do irregularities send ripples through the self? What causes the changes between the two? We discover the differences between the *iamb*, the *trochee*, the *anapest*, the *dactyl*, and the *spondee* by speaking and stepping them.

We walk the path of our Shakespearean characters by literally stepping the rhythms of their words. We find the rhetoric and logic through, not only the rhythm of the words within our bodies, but also in our phrasing of the argument. I teach First Folio technique following the work of Neil Freeman, in which the particular phrasing that allows for the punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and placement of words on the page informs the choices we make in playing the play’s action. We sing and dance not only our favorite rounds in class, but also Shakespeare’s text in order to open our listening and bring our sound and sense out where it can be shared and allowed to make meaning. Finally, we explore our imagination with our released breath and voice, and we give it

freedom to discover an outlet in any part, mode, or way our voice wants to express itself.

“Imagination bodies forth” with the word, be it sung or spoken.

6. Conclusions

*It is the noblest task of art, and preponderantly of music,
to liberate human beings from their loneliness [...], to
bring them in contact with each other, and to give them
belief in their community with others.*

Walter Felsenstein

This thesis has sought to show why and how the inclusion of choral singing in the voice and speech classroom will benefit the actor. In pursuing this work, I have brought to bear my most ardent belief that the actor can and will do anything if encouraged and supported in the attempt. I believe that through singing together:

- Actors learn courage and receptivity to impulse.
- They open easily to the breath, allowing habitual tensions to drop away, and find natural, unforced presence.
- They discover free, resonant, expressive voices.

- They lead and follow with ease and facility.
- They gain an innate sense of rhythm and melody that makes them compelling to listen to and watch.
- And they realize that they enjoy singing and can move from singing to speaking to any number of other ways of making sound at any time.

I will continue to use choral singing in my teaching, and in my scholarly and artistic research. I hope that in reading this treatise you will also find value in this work and may incorporate it into your own practice. As you do, keep in mind Walter Felsenstein's words and aim for that noble task that brings the art forms, the artists, and the audience together to realize not only our humanity, but also our community.

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APPENDIX A

Vocal Storytelling: Speaking and Singing in Ensemble-Oriented Performance THEA 491/791 Autumn 2007 Syllabus

MWF noon – 12:50
Shafer 302
Instructor: Dan Dennis
Email: dennisdc@vcu.edu
Office: Shafer 202
Office hours: by appointment only

Required Materials

- Coursepack from Uptown Color
- Movement clothes

Course Description and Purpose

Vocal Storytelling has three main goals. First, we aim to marry speaking and singing, and by so doing, to create more complete voice performers. The course is, in this way, a training class; it works over a long period of time through repetition. Secondly, the course aims to create story and meaning which is communicated mainly, but not exclusively, through the voice. The course will require students to listen and think critically and creatively. Thirdly, the course is designed to allow for differing theories and ideas on creativity, art, and the reception of art to be discussed and filtered through our work. This course is research for my imminent MFA thesis: the design of a new curriculum for the voice and speech education of actors, which will place singing at the heart of the training.

Objectives

- To develop an awareness of our own bodies and an ability to free the tension contained therein
- To work toward expanded breath capacity and strengthened vocal support
- To foster one's awareness of his or her own vocal and articulatory habits and abilities
- To sing and speak with our whole body and our whole selves, filling our sounds with intention, emotion, and meaning
- To find resonant and forward placement of tone that projects clearly and communicates easily
- To develop an ability to hear and match pitch
- To integrate the body, breath, and voice in an ensemble setting – to find one's whole self in accord with a functional group
- To create and share compelling narrative through the medium of our voices
- To have fun!

Attendance and Punctuality

We only meet for 50 minutes at a time; therefore, your punctuality is expected and appreciated. If you will be absent or tardy, for any reason, please call or email me ahead of time.

Honor Policy, Disabilities, Religious Observances

Please see the VCU Resource Guide for further information.

What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>). Keep your information up-to-date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Grading

Attendance and Participation = 40%

Small group project one = 20%

Small group project two = 20%

Final large group project = 20%

Class Schedule

The calendar is subject to change.

WEEK ONE: M Aug 27 – F Aug 31

Introduction to Singing as a group

WEEK TWO: M Sep 3 – F Sep 7

No class Monday (Labor Day).

Coursepack available from Uptown Color.

Read Lessac: The Three Energies

Read and Practice Rodenburg: Basic Voice Warm-Up, Speaking with Singing, and Focus and Energy

WEEK THREE: M Sep 10 – F Sep 14

Dan may be serving Jury Duty on Monday – check your email.

Read Rodenburg: Listening, Looking, Learning, and Sight-Reading

Read Oliver: Breath

Read aloud Poe: Annabel Lee

WEEK FOUR: M Sep 17 – F Sep 21

Dan may be serving Jury Duty on Monday – check your email.

Read Balk: Exploring the Territory and Legacy of the Past?

WEEK FIVE: M Sep 24 – F Sep 28

Dan may be serving Jury Duty on Monday – check your email.

Read Balk: Commitment to the Present and The Uses of Improvisation

WEEK SIX: M Oct 1 – F Oct 5

Read Nachmanovitch: Sex and Violins, Practice, and The Power of Limits

WEEK SEVEN: M Oct 8 – F Oct 12

Read Nachmanovitch: The Power of Mistakes, Playing Together, and Form Unfolding

WEEK EIGHT: M Oct 15 – F Oct 19

Present first small group pieces.

No class Friday – reading day

WEEK NINE: M Oct 22 – F Oct 26

Read Rodenburg: The Imaginative Voice

Read aloud Thomas: Under Milk Wood

Read Brecht: On Gestic Music

WEEK TEN: M Oct 29 – F Nov 2

Work

WEEK ELEVEN: M Nov 5 – F Nov 9

Work

WEEK TWELVE: M Nov 12 – F Nov 16

Present second small group pieces.

WEEK THIRTEEN: M Nov 19 – F Nov 23

Discussion of work thus far.

No class Wednesday and Friday – give thanks!

WEEK FOURTEEN: M Nov 26 – F Nov 30

Work

WEEK FIFTEEN: M Dec 3 – W Dec 5

Final large group presentation.

NO FINAL EXAM**Coursepack:**

1. Lessac: The Three Energies
2. Rodenburg: Basic Voice Warm-Up
3. Rodenburg: Speaking with Singing
4. Rodenburg: Focus and Energy
5. Rodenburg: Listening, Looking, Learning, Sight-Reading
6. Oliver: Breath
7. Poe: Annabel Lee (from Oliver)
8. Shakespeare: Macbeth (from Oliver)
9. Blake: The Tyger (from Oliver)
10. Donne: Song (from Oliver)
11. Frost: Stopping by Woods (from Oliver)
12. Balk: Exploring the Territory
13. Balk: Legacy of the Past?
14. Balk: Commitment to the Present
15. Balk: The Uses of Improvisation
16. Nachmanovitch: Sex and Violins
17. Nachmanovitch: Practice
18. Nachmanovitch: The Power of Limits
19. Nachmanovitch: The Power of Mistakes

20. Nachmanovitch: Playing Together
21. Nachmanovitch: Form Unfolding
22. Rodenburg: The Imaginative Voice
23. Thomas: Under Milk Wood
24. Brecht: On Gestic Music
25. Shafer: Epitaph for Moonlight

APPENDIX B

Stage Voice and Speech

THEA 201 section 3

Autumn 2007

Syllabus

Tuesday/Thursday 11:30 – 12:20 in Shafer 201

Wednesday Lab 10:00 – 10:50 in Performing Arts Center 72

Instructor: Dan Dennis
Email: dennisdc@vcu.edu
Office: Shafer 202
Office hours: by appointment only

Course Description

An introductory course in vocal production for the actor. Focus will be on the voice/breath/body connection, vocal anatomy, resonators, range, projection, and articulation and on their application to acting. Work will be applied to text. Healthy voice care and use will also be addressed.

Required Materials

- *The Actor Speaks*, by Patsy Rodenburg
- Movement clothes, following the department's Performance Dress Code
- A water bottle, this syllabus, and your journal and pen, which you will bring to every class

Suggested Materials

- *Freeing the Natural Voice*, by Kristin Linklater

Purpose and Philosophy

Voice work is the elusive heart of good acting. When our bodies, our breath, and our voices are connected, we are engaged in creating compelling storytelling. When that connection is severed or when our training is incomplete, we are unable to communicate effectively to an audience and with a partner onstage. By embarking on vocal training for the stage, we agree to practice slowly, mindfully, and patiently. The work we do is personal; you are working on yourself alone. However, we work together in order to share and support each other in what might otherwise be a lonely practice. We embrace this work as the foundation of our life in the theatre. And we pursue it diligently and enthusiastically.

Objectives

- To familiarize the student with the basic concepts of voice and speech for the stage
- To develop an awareness of our own bodies and an ability to free the tension contained therein
- To work toward expanded breath capacity and strengthened vocal support
- To foster the student's awareness of his or her own vocal and articulatory habits and abilities
- To develop an ability to listen critically
- To integrate the body, breath, and voice and to apply them to acting work
- To develop and maintain healthy voice and breath usage both within and outside of class
- To create a personal vocal regimen
- To cultivate a practice of discipline both within and outside of class

Attendance and Punctuality

Acting is participatory: there is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to “make up” missed experience. You are therefore allowed no more than two absences from any core class. **With a third absence, your final letter grade will automatically drop one full letter and will continue to drop one letter grade with each additional absence.** These two allowed absences are in case of emergency only. They are not extra holiday time, and they are not to be taken without first consulting your instructor.

Furthermore, in addition to adversely affecting your own learning process, arriving late for class disrupts the learning process of fellow students. **Therefore, tardiness in excess of 20 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every two instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equal one absence for grading purposes.**

If you will be absent or tardy, for any reason, call or email me ahead of time. If you do so, I will afford you every benefit of the doubt.

GRADING

In-Class Work

Participation (10 pts per class)	300
Discipline	50
Growth	50
Craft	50
Mid-term: Personal Warm-up	50
Sonnet	50
Total In-Class Points:	550

Written Work

Initial Self-Evaluation	50
Journal	200
Performance Observation – <i>Volume of Smoke</i>	50
Mid-term: Personal Warm-up	50
Performance Observation – <i>Dracula</i>	50
Final Self-Evaluation	50
Total Written Points:	450

Total Semester Points: 1000

Grading Scale

A	1000 – 900
B	899 – 800
C	799 – 700
D	699 – 600
F	599 and fewer points

Participation

You will receive a grade for the day on a scale from 10 to 0. This grade is given for each Tuesday and Thursday class, but not for the Wednesday labs (although your attendance and punctuality will be noted).

10-8 Student is actively participating in class, obviously well prepared, and positively engaged with the material and fellow classmates.

7-6 Student is present, somewhat prepared, but not participating fully.

5-0 Student is unprepared, does not engage in class exercises, is disruptive, disrespectful, or absent.

Self-Evaluations

Many student actors are completely unaware of their own physical, breathing, vocal, and speech habits, and also of their possible abilities. In order to achieve greater self awareness over the course of the semester, you will be required to evaluate your own voice on paper at the beginning of the semester and again at the end. You will assess your:

- Body – alignment, posture, excess tension, and freedom of movement. Does your body hinder or help you on stage and in life?
- Breath – capacity and support. Do you have the breath you need, when you need it?
- Voice – tone and placement. What do you sound like? Are you able to fill space and command attention? Do you speak with intention?
- Range and Resonance. Do you have full access to your voice? Where do you feel yourself vibrate when you make sound?
- Speech – the lips, the teeth, and the tongue. Are you understood by others? Do you have a regional dialect? Do you speak to the ends of your thoughts? What parts of your mouth's musculature help your speech, and which parts hinder it?

Journals

Your journals will look reflectively at the assigned readings from Patsy Rodenburg's *The Actor Speaks* and at our explorations in class and should discuss the application of our work out of class (in rehearsal, in scene work, in auditions, etc.). If you are able, take 15 minutes to journal immediately following each class and after exploring Rodenburg's exercises on your own. This time is when your reactions are most fresh and honest. Your journals will be collected frequently throughout the semester and read in order to note and comment upon your progress.

Performance Observations

This semester you will observe the vocal work from Theatre VCU's mainstage productions: *Volume of Smoke* and *Dracula*. Observation papers should be 2 to 3 pages in length and will address the body, breath, voice, range and resonance, and speech work of one actor performing a large role in the production. These papers will be due one week after the departmental opening of each production. If you are a member of the cast or crew of either show, please see me.

Personal Warm-Up

This assignment will serve as the mid-term exam and will be relatively simple if your attendance and participation have been exemplary. Throughout the semester you will learn techniques for building a good vocal warm-up. The exam will consist of you demonstrating in writing, as well as practically, your ability to use the exercises to ready yourself to perform. The Personal Warm-Up is your gift to yourself as an actor. You will take it with you, continue to discover yourself with it, changing it as you need, and utilize it throughout your theatrical career.

Written Work – Format and Credit

- All written work must have your name on it.
- Written work must be MLA formatted, typed, and stapled.
- Journals may be written in longhand if your writing is legible.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day posted to be considered for full credit.

Honor Policy, Disabilities, Religious Observances

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5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Class Schedule

The syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

WEEK ONE

Thursday, August 23

Introductions, overview

Read Rodenburg pages 1 – 24 (through A Note on Fitness)

Tuesday, August 28

* Course contract and student information form due *

Rodenburg Exercise 1

Audition Monologues

Wednesday, August 29

Lab with Janet Rodgers

All Department Orientation: 3 pm, Hodges Theatre

Thursday, August 30

Audition Monologues

Read Rodenburg pages 24 – 38 (through Subliminal Communication)

Theatre VCU Auditions: Hodges Theatre, 6:30 until complete

WEEK TWO**Tuesday, September 4**

* Initial Self-Evaluation due *

Rodenburg Exercises 2 – 4

Wednesday, September 5

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, September 6

Oxyrhythms

Read Rodenburg pages 38 – 50

(through Feeling Supported and On the Text)

WEEK THREE**Tuesday, September 11**

Rodenburg Exercises 5 – 8

Wednesday, September 12

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, September 13

Oxyrhythms

Read Rodenburg pages 50 – 66 (Owning Words through Rib Reserve)

WEEK FOUR**Tuesday, September 18**

Rodenburg Exercises 9 – 14

Wednesday, September 19

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, September 20

Oxyrhythms

Read Rodenburg pages 67 – 81 (Freeing the Voice through Supporting the Word)

WEEK FIVE**Tuesday, September 25**

Rodenburg Exercises 15 – 22

Wednesday, September 26

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, September 27

Oxyrhythms

Continue Rodenburg Exercises 15 – 22

Volume of Smoke – department opening

Read Rodenburg pages 81 – 87 (Listening through Sight-reading)

WEEK SIX**Tuesday, October 2**

Rodenburg Warm-up

Sight-reading

Wednesday, October 3

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, October 4

* Performance Observation of *Volume of Smoke* due *

Oxyrhythms

Sight-reading

Memorize “O Splendor of Sunburst”

Read Rodenburg pages 88 – 104 (Stage Two through Range into Text Work)

WEEK SEVEN**Tuesday, October 9**

Rodenburg Exercises 23 – 25

“O Splendor of Sunburst”

Wednesday, October 10

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, October 11

Oxyrhythms

Singing

Read Rodenburg pages 104 – 122 (Speech through The Bone Prop)

WEEK EIGHT**Tuesday, October 16**

Rodenburg Exercises 26 – 30

Wednesday, October 17

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, October 18

NO CLASS – Reading Day

Read Rodenburg pages 122 – 139 (Accents through Speaking into Singing)

WEEK NINE**Tuesday, October 23**

* Mid-term: Personal Warm-up *

Wednesday, October 24

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, October 25

* Mid-term: Personal Warm-up *

Read Rodenburg pages 139 – 160 (Big Vocal Moments through Speech Characteristics)

WEEK TEN**Tuesday, October 30**

Sight-reading – John Donne

Listening

Wednesday, October 31

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, November 1

Oxyrhythms

Memorize John Donne sonnet

WEEK ELEVEN**Tuesday, November 6**

John Donne sonnets

Wednesday, November 7

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, November 8

Oxyrhythms

Dracula – department opening**WEEK TWELVE****Tuesday, November 13**

John Donne sonnets

“On the pulse of morning”

Wednesday, November 14

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, November 15* Observation of *Dracula* due *

Oxyrhythms

WEEK THIRTEEN**Tuesday, November 20**

John Donne sonnets

Memorize assigned sections of “On the pulse of morning”

Wednesday, November 21

NO CLASS

Thursday, November 22

NO CLASS – Give Thanks!

WEEK FOURTEEN**Tuesday, November 27**

* Final Self-Evaluation due *

Perform John Donne sonnets

Wednesday, November 28

Lab with Janet Rodgers

Thursday, November 29

Perform John Donne sonnets

“On the pulse of morning”

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tuesday, December 4

* Portfolios due *

“On the pulse of morning”

Wednesday, December 5

Perform “On the pulse of morning” – Hodges Theatre

Thursday, December 6 - Last class day

Course evaluation and discussion

NO FINAL EXAM

APPENDIX C

Stage Voice and Speech

THEA 202 section 3

Spring 2008

Syllabus

Wednesday 8:20 – 10:50 am

Performing Arts Center B72

Instructor: Dan Dennis

Email: dennisdc@vcu.edu

Office: Shafer 202

Office hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Melissa Carroll-Jackson

Course Description

A continuing introductory course in vocal production for the actor. Our emphasis will pickup from last semester's work on the body/breath/voice connection, and lead into more focused work on the resonators, range, projection, and articulation, including the International Phonetic Alphabet and its application to speaking both American Standard Speech and British Received Pronunciation. Work will be applied to text.

Required Materials

- *Fundamentals of Voice and Articulation (14th Edition)* by Lyle V. Mayer
- Bring your Voice & Speech journal everyday, including this syllabus, and a pen

Suggested Materials

- *The Actor Speaks* by Patsy Rodenburg
- *Freeing the Natural Voice* by Kristin Linklater
- A yoga mat – we will be doing oxyrhythms

Objectives

To continue working toward our goals from last semester:

- Freeing the tension in our bodies
- Expanding our breath capacity
- Strengthening our vocal support
- Placing our vocal tone forward and out
- Communicating more clearly verbally, non-verbally, and in writing
- Cultivating personal discipline

To those goals we add the following:

- To master standard/career speech
- To learn the International Phonetic Alphabet
- To learn to *hear* speech and its particular qualities, and not to simply see it on the page
- To become proficient sight-readers
- To learn to hear and speak British Received Pronunciation
- To achieve greater range and resonance in our voices, creating a palate of sounds through which we may discover many rich characters
- To create clear and compelling speech for sophomore assessments
- To enjoy ourselves and each other

Attendance and Punctuality

Because this is a studio course, your success is directly dependent on your presence in the classroom. You are expected to be in class on time to begin warm-up. This semester it will be your responsibility to initial the sign-in sheet by 8:20 am. The departmental policy allows for only two absences during the semester per course; however, because we meet only once every week, **you are allowed only one absence.** With a second absence, your final letter grade will automatically drop one full letter and will continue to drop one letter grade with each additional absence. Your allowed absence is in case of emergency only. It should not be viewed as extra holiday.

If you will be absent or tardy, for any reason, please call or email me ahead of time. If you do so, I will afford you every benefit of the doubt.

If an illness or other circumstance should cause you to excessively miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to pursue a withdrawal so that the course may be undertaken again when you are more able. The last day to withdraw is March 21.

Grading

Daily participation = 10%
 Sight-reading monologue = 10%
 Standard British dialect monologue = 10%
 Children's story = 10%
 IPA transcriptions = 20%
 Journal = 20%
 Final IPA test = 10%
 Growth = 10%

Grading Scale:

100-90 = A
 89-80 = B
 79-70 = C
 69-60 = D
 Below 60 = F

Criteria for Evaluation of spoken work:

- Demonstrated ability to take space, to center one's self, and, as needed, to become the character.
- Demonstrated consistent release of excess tension and support of breath.
- Forward placement of voice and thought into space.
- Clarity of thought and energy through the spoken line of text, honoring punctuation and utilizing variety in range and pace to express shifts in thought and emotion.
- Demonstrated consistent use of "Standard Speech."
- Ability to take spoken text to levels of energy, vowel extension, and consonant clarity and dexterity, which are engaging to onstage partners and with an audience and appropriate to the context of the text. Consistent Second Circle energy.

Speeches

1. **Sight-reading monologue.** We will sight-read different kinds of speeches each class for the first month or so. By the fifth week you will be graded on your sight-reading ability following the same criteria as for any monologue in class.
2. **Standard British dialect monologue.** I will give you a packet of monologues to choose from. We will focus on the sound changes, as well as your use of pitch range.
3. **A Children's Story.** You will choose a story from a list I will give you, appropriate for three to six year olds, with at least four characters and a narrator. Write the story out and make cuts as needed so that your piece is between three and five minutes in length – no longer. With these stories we will focus on exploration of character through vocal range and resonance. At the end of the semester you will perform

your story for a class of children at VCU's Day Care Center. Please have your story typed out and timed by March 26.

International Phonetic Alphabet

You will learn the IPA this semester through in-class work, games and quizzes, and by transcribing your monologues in IPA. Our goal is to be fluent enough to easily apply the work to learning dialects.

Journals

This semester your journal should focus on:

1. **Our work in class** – the monologues, the exercises, the IPA, and the children's story. We will allow some time for journaling in class.
2. **Your individual exploration** of the exercises in Mayer's book *Fundamentals of Voice and Articulation* as assigned in class.
3. **Hey, listen to this!** - ask a friend to tell you exactly what they hear, see, and feel as you speak your current speech for them. Her feedback may be about consonants, vowel sounds, pitch, resonance, timbre, emotion, or anything else really. Ask your listener to be as specific as possible, and write down exactly what he gives you. You need to complete this assignment a minimum of four times.
4. **Your application of class work** to whatever you may be working on outside of class – a show, a monologue for another class, an audition, etc.

As I did last semester, I will read your journals in order to note and comment upon your progress. If there are sections of your journal you do not wish to be read, please fold the page over.

Portfolio

Again this semester you will create a portfolio of all your work, which will be turned in at the end of term. As you continue on to the Dialects class next year, you will find it immensely useful to have all your IPA and Standard British material in one easily accessible place. Refer to the checklist sheet at the end of this syllabus for the specific items to include.

Casting and Production Assignments

Are you involved in *For Colored Girls...* or *Cabaret*? Are you involved in a Shafer production or something else? Please let me know.

Decorum and Dress

Turn your cell phones off as you walk in the classroom door. Movement clothes should be black with no lettering or logo. No jewelry. See the department's Performance Dress Code (pages 16 – 17 of the student handbook).

Personal Comfort

The study of voice and movement often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in close proximity in order to adjust or align the body and voice. We all have days when we do not want such contact. If you are having such a day, please let your instructor know and appropriate accommodation will be made. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you might not be ready to advance in your training. If deemed necessary by the instructor, any student with such issues will be asked to meet with the head of performance and the instructor to discuss how we might better facilitate you through the course.

Honor Policy

Please refer to the VCU Honor Policy in the VCU Resource Guide.

Disabilities

If you have a disability, please inform me, and I will try to accommodate your needs. Please see the VCU Resource Guide for further information.

Religious Observances

It is the policy of VCU to accord students, on an individual basis, the opportunity to observe their traditional religious holidays. Students desiring to observe a religious holiday of special importance must provide advance written notification to each instructor by the end of the second week of classes.

What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU

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3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Class Calendar

Week One: W Jan 16

Standard Speech

Introduction to IPA – voicing, placement, manner, and consonants

Mayer: Chapter 5, Articulate! and Chapter 6, Conserve Your Consonants – read, work through exercises, and journal on them – in Chap 6 find the consonants you have trouble with and spend your time with them; definitely work on [r]

Week Two: W Jan 23

IPA – vowels

Sight-reading

Mayer: Chapter 7, Varnish Your Vowels – read, work through all vowels, and journal on them

Week Three: W Jan 30

IPA – [r]

Sight-reading

First IPA monologue transcription due – consonants only

Week Four: W Feb 6

IPA – diphthongs

Sight-reading

Mayer: Chapter 8, Discipline Your Diphthongs – read, work through all diphthongs, and journal on them

Week Five: W Feb 13

For Colored Girls... matinee – class meets in B53

Sight-reading for grade

Complete IPA monologue transcription due

**For Colored Girls...* – departmental opening Thursday, February 14

Week Six: W Feb 20

Standard British dialect

Week Seven: W Feb 27

Standard British monologue work – memorized

Week Eight: W Mar 5

Present British monologues

Complete IPA monologue transcription due

Journals due – all work on Mayer: Chapters 5-8 complete

Week Nine

SPRING BREAK

Week Ten: W Mar 19

Present British monologues for grade

Mayer: Chapter 9, Be Varied and Vivid – Expressiveness – read, work through exercises, and journal on them

Week Eleven: W Mar 26

Children's stories – edited version of story due

Week Twelve: W Apr 2

Children's stories

IPA children's story transcription due

Week Thirteen: W Apr 9

Cabaret matinee – class meets in B57

Children's stories – memorized

**Cabaret* – departmental opening Thursday, April 10

Week Fourteen: W Apr 16

Cabaret matinee – class location TBA

Present stories for grade

Week Fifteen: W Apr 23

IPA test

Portfolios due

Sophomore Assessment: W Apr 30

TBA

Final Exam: F May 2, 8 – 10:50 am

Children's stories presented at VCU Day Care Center

APPENDIX D

Advanced Stage Voice & Speech – Dialects

THEA 301, section 1

Autumn 2007

Syllabus

Monday/Wednesday 3:00 – 4:50 pm

Shafer 201

Instructor: Dan Dennis

Email: dennisdc@vcu.edu

Office: Shafer 202

Office hours: by appointment only

Required Text:

Accents and Dialects for Stage and Screen by Paul Meier.

Most of the full scripts of the plays, from which your monologues are taken, will be on reserve at Cabell library or the Kenneth Campbell Library. As with any monologue, you are required to read the whole play so that you understand the circumstances and motivations of your character.

Optional Resources:

- *More Stage Dialects* - Book and Tapes - by Jerry Blunt
- *The Dialect Handbook* by Ginny Kopf (available at VCU bookstore)
- *Accents: A Manual for Actors* – Robert Blumenthal (incl. CD)
- Gillian-Lane Plescia tapes
- *Dialects for the Stage* by Evangeline Machlin (tapes included)
- Web site: International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA) www.ukans.edu/~idea

- Janet has two file cabinet drawers filled with dialect tapes. Let me know what you need for your Real Life Character Study.
- An interesting test: www.blogthings.com/amenglishdialecttest

Required Materials:

- A notebook with a pocket or a binder for handouts and evaluations
- Two audio tapes or CDs for your own recordings

Course Description

During this semester we shall be studying six dialects. We shall spend approximately two weeks learning each dialect and will be applying each of these dialects to one minute selections from a variety of texts, which shall be notated with phonetic changes using the IPA, memorized, and presented in class and then recorded onto audio tape and counted as part of the final grade. In addition, each student will prepare a “Key Sentence” for each dialect. The key sentence, created individually by each student, will contain key sounds of the particular dialect and will assist the student in connecting with the acoustical and physical changes required for speaking that dialect. While we are studying a particular dialect, we will use **only** that dialect while speaking in class. Each student will also prepare and present a “Real Life Character Study”.

Objectives

- To discover how to approach learning and performing a dialect for the theatre
- To practice critical listening
- To practice notating sound substitutions using IPA
- To continue our work on strengthening vocal support, placement, resonance, and articulation for clarity, fullness of sound, and focus in speaking.
- To continue practicing Patsy Rodenburg’s notion of Second Circle energy.

Attendance and Punctuality

Because this is a studio course, your success is directly dependent on your presence in the classroom. You are expected to be in class on time to begin warm-up. The departmental policy allows for only two absences during the semester per course. Two late arrivals equals one absence. **With a third absence, your final letter grade will automatically drop one full letter and will continue to drop one letter grade with each additional absence.**

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Decorum and Dress

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2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

GRADING

Your final grade will reflect:

- your monologue work = 50%
- midterm exam = 10%
- final exam = 10%
- presentation of your Real Life Character study = 20%
- and your participation = 10%

University Grading Scale:

100% - 90% = A

89% - 80% = B

79% - 70% = C

69% - 60% = D

59% - 0 = F

Grading criteria for monologues

0 - 2 errors = A

3 - 4 errors = B

5 - 6 errors = C

7 - 8 errors = D

More than 8 errors = F

Any monologue may be re-performed for a higher grade as many times as the student desires (and as time allows). Each grade, even if it is the same or lower than the original, will be averaged in with the original monologue grade. Memorized assignments are due in class on the assigned date. Late assignments will result in the lowering of one letter grade for each class day it is late.

Real Life Character Study

- Identify a person you would like to interview.
- Ask that person if they would mind if you interviewed them for a dialect study class.
- Set up two interview times if possible. The first, to get to know the person and to get them familiar with the microphone and recording equipment. The second time, to get more in depth stories.
- Research the place of origin of your person in order to ask the questions which will elicit candid responses.
- Possibly bring along someone who knows the person, if that seems to make your subject more relaxed.
- Record your subject, using a microphone that is placed close enough to your subject to record all of the information clearly. You may ask your subject to tell a story of their life in the world they left or you may find something else that seems more appropriate. Childhood stories usually relax a subject and provide good monologue material. Observe their gesture and mannerisms.
- Listen to the tape repeatedly. Mimic gestures and lip sync with the recording.
- Write down a monologue extracted from what you have on tape. Include sub-vocal sounds and pauses.
- Research the dialect in dialect books to see if you can get any more information which might be applicable to your subject.
- Write in phonetics (IPA) the sounds which are characteristic of this particular subject's dialect. Include sub-vocal sounds.
- Memorize with gestures. Rehearse with shoes and clothes appropriate to your subject/character.
- Perform the piece with dialectal changes, gestures, mannerisms, and clothing appropriate to your character. The monologue you perform should be between 30 seconds and one minute in duration.
- Teach the class the dialect you have studied. Provide a handout detailing the sound changes.

Class Calendar

The syllabus and the assignments therein are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

WEEK ONE

M Aug 27

Class Warm-Up

Introduction to Dialects – syllabus and review materials (TransAtlantic and IPA)

Real Life Character Study

W Aug 29

Standard British English (Received Pronunciation)

* Student information form due *

Th Aug 30

Theatre VCU Cattle Call – Hodges Theatre, 6:30 pm until complete

WEEK TWO

M Sep 3

No class

W Sep 5

Continue RP

Key Sentence due

WEEK THREE

M Sep 10

RP monologue work

* Monologue transcription of characteristic sounds due*

W Sep 12

RP monologues graded

WEEK FOUR

M Sep 17

Begin Cockney

W Sep 19

Cockney continued

Key Sentence due

WEEK FIVE

M Sep 24

Cockney monologue work

* Monologue transcription of characteristic sounds due*

W Sep 26

Cockney monologues graded

Th Sep 27

Volume of Smoke – department opening

WEEK SIX

M Oct 1

Begin Irish

W Oct 3

Irish continued

Key Sentence due

WEEK SEVEN

M Oct 8

Irish monologue work

* Monologue transcription of characteristic sounds due*

W Oct 10

Irish monologues graded

WEEK EIGHT

M Oct 15

Review for Mid-Term Exam

W Oct 17

Mid-Term Exam

* Hand in audio tape/CD of monologues 1 – 3*

Th Oct 18/F Oct 19

Reading Days – no VCU classes

WEEK NINE

M Oct 22

Real Life Character Study tapes/CD's due

W Oct 24

Finish listening to RLC Study tapes/CD's

WEEK TEN

M Oct 29

Begin Brooklyn, NY

W Oct 31

Brooklyn continued

Key Sentence due

WEEK ELEVEN

M Nov 5

Brooklyn monologue work

* Monologue transcription of characteristic sounds due*

W Nov 7

Brooklyn monologues graded

Th Nov 8

Dracula – department opening

WEEK TWELVE**M Nov 12**

Begin Russian

W Nov 14

Russian continued

Key Sentence due

WEEK THIRTEEN**M Nov 19**

European Picnic – Russian/German/French

W Nov 21

No class – give thanks!

WEEK FOURTEEN**M Nov 26**

Russian monologue work

* Monologue transcription of characteristic sounds due*

W Nov 28

Russian monologues graded

WEEK FIFTEEN**M Dec 3**

Real Life Character Study presentations

W Dec 5

Real Life Character Study presentations continued

FINAL EXAM

Time TBD

APPENDIX E

Advanced Stage Voice & Speech – Shakespeare

THEA 302, section 2

Spring 2008

Syllabus

Monday/Wednesday 3:00 – 4:50 pm

Shafer 204

Instructor: Dan Dennis

Email: dennisdc@vcu.edu

Office: Shafer 202

Office hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Diego Villada

Email: villadad@vcu.edu

Required Materials

- *Speaking Shakespeare* by Patsy Rodenburg
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
- *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare
(Any edition of these plays will be fine.)
- Movement clothes, following the department's Performance Dress Code
- Please bring your syllabus, a notebook and a pen every day

Suggested Materials

- *Freeing Shakespeare's Voice* by Kristin Linklater
- A yoga mat – we will be doing oxyrhythms daily

Philosophy

We are here to practice communicating through our voice and our speech, using Shakespeare's rich text. Our time together is short, and we have much to accomplish. Therefore, we commit to being fully present and prepared to practice every day. Only through struggle will we accomplish our ends. We embark on this struggle joyfully.

Objectives

- To explore a variety of approaches to Shakespeare's texts.
- To work on strengthening vocal support, resonance, and articulation for clarity, fullness of sound, and focus in speaking.
- To experience extended dynamics of speech – pitch, variety, rate, rhythm – in poetic text.
- To give you the basic skills which will enable you to approach any verse text with confidence, courage, and joy.
- To clearly communicate Shakespeare's language with an audience, while connecting to the character's thoughts, ideas, and emotions.
- To continue to practice and maintain Rodenburg's Second Circle energy.

Attendance and Punctuality

Because this is a studio course, your success is directly dependent on your presence in the classroom. You are expected to be in class on time to begin warm-up. This semester it will be your responsibility to initial the sign-in sheet by 3:00. The departmental policy allows for only two absences during the semester per course. With a third absence, your final letter grade will automatically drop one full letter and will continue to drop one letter grade with each additional absence. The two allowed absences are in case of emergency only. They are not extra holiday time, and they are not to be taken without first consulting your instructor.

In addition to adversely affecting your own learning process, arriving late for class disrupts the learning process of fellow students. Therefore, tardiness in excess of 20 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every two instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equal one absence for grading purposes.

If you will be absent or tardy, for any reason, please call or email me ahead of time.

If you do so, I will afford you every benefit of the doubt.

If an illness or other circumstance should cause you to excessively miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to pursue a withdrawal so that the course may be undertaken again when you are more able. The last day to withdraw is March 21.

Grading

All written work and all daily work will be graded. Your attendance, participation, preparedness, growth, and discipline will be noted, as will your demonstrated mastery of the rhetorical devices contained in Shakespeare's writing and your ability to clearly communicate the meaning of the text through the spoken word.

Here's the breakdown for your final semester grade:

- Daily Participation = 10%
- Craft (all components of voice & speech) = 10%
- Written work = 20%
- Sonnet #29 = 10%
- Monologue = 10%
- Scene = 10%
- Growth = 10%
- Final Exam = 20%

Grading Scale:

- 100-90 = A
- 89-80 = B
- 79-70 = C
- 69-60 = D
- Below 60 = F

Criteria for Evaluation of Spoken Work:

- Demonstrated ability to take space, center one's self, and become the character.
- Demonstrated consistent release of excess tension and support of breath.
- Forward placement of voice and thought into space.
- Clarity of thought and energy through the spoken line of text, honoring punctuation and utilizing variety in range and pace to express shifts in thought and emotion.
- Demonstrated use of "Standard Speech."
- Ability to take spoken text to levels of energy, vowel extension, and consonant clarity and dexterity, which are engaging to onstage partners and to an audience and appropriate to the context of the play. Consistent Second Circle energy and focus are required to receive the grade of "A" in the course.

Format and Credit for Written Work

All printed work (self-assessments and Hey, Listen to this!) should be typed, double-spaced, and stapled. Please, read everything you write before you turn it in. If it does not make sense to you, it will not make sense to me. Punctuate for meaning. Your written voice should speak in complete thoughts. Assignments should be turned in the week they are due to be considered for full credit. Lastly, your name should be on everything you turn in.

Rodenburg Reading Responses – www.nicenet.org

This semester you will record your responses to the reading assignments from Patsy Rodenburg's *Speaking Shakespeare* in an online forum on Nicenet.org, where you will discuss how the reading relates to your artistic struggle with Shakespeare's text. These postings need not be long, but should be complete. I am interested in your particular experience with Rodenburg and Shakespeare, be that agreement, disagreement, or something else.

In using Nicenet in the past, I have found it useful to write in a separate document, and then copy and paste it into Nicenet. This way you can save everything you write, just in case it is lost in the transfer. All postings will be public. You must respond to each reading assignment in order to pass this course. Extra credit will be given for additional postings and response to one another – let this be a conversation about our experience with Shakespeare.

Self-Assessments

You will assess yourself in writing twice over the course of the semester based on Rodenburg's Part One: Foundation Craft – The Body, The State of Readiness, Breath, Support, Freeing the Voice, Placing the Free Voice, Range and Resonance, and Clear Speech. This assignment will be printed and turned in. I want to know where you think you presently stand in your voice & speech work. Your honest assessment will inform the work you need to do during this semester.

Hey, listen to this!

You will ask a friend to tell you exactly what they hear, see, and feel as you speak your text for them. His or her feedback may be about consonants, vowel sounds, pitch, resonance, timbre, emotion, or anything else really. Type up their notes, print them off, and turn them in verbatim.

Speeches

We will begin the semester with Shakespeare's sonnet number 29, which we will work on together, and then present individually. The scenes and monologues will come from the five selected Shakespeare plays. (If you haven't already, read the plays now! You are expected to be conversant on all five plays.) The final exam will be a sonnet of your choice (other than number 29), which we will not work on in class.

Casting and Production Assignments

Are you involved in a mainstage production? Are you involved in a Shafer production or something else? Please let me know.

Decorum and Dress

Turn your cell phones off as you walk in the classroom door. Movement clothes should be black with no lettering or logo. No jewelry. See the department's Performance Dress Code (pages 16 – 17 of the student handbook).

Personal Comfort

The study of voice and movement often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in close proximity in order to adjust or align the body and voice. We all have days when we do not want such contact. If you are having such a day, please let your instructor know and appropriate accommodation will be made. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you might not be ready to advance in your training. If deemed necessary by the instructor, any student with such issues will be asked to meet with the head of performance and the instructor to discuss how we might better facilitate you through the course.

Honor Policy

Please refer to the VCU Honor Policy in the VCU Resource Guide.

Disabilities

If you have a disability, please inform me, and I will try to accommodate your needs. Please see the VCU Resource Guide for further information.

Religious Observances

It is the policy of VCU to accord students, on an individual basis, the opportunity to observe their traditional religious holidays. Students desiring to observe a religious holiday of special importance must provide advance written notification to each instructor by the end of the second week of classes.

What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>). Keep your information up-to-date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Class Calendar

Week One: M Jan 14 – W Jan 16

Standard Speech review.

Sonnet #29.

Read *Speaking Shakespeare*, Part One: Foundation Craft.

Week Two: M Jan 21 – W Jan 23

Speaking metrical poetry.

Sonnet work.

Week Three: M Jan 28 – W Jan 30

Sonnet work.

Personal assessment based on Rodenburg's Part One due W Jan 30.

Week Four: M Feb 4 – W Feb 6

Present sonnet for grade.

Hey, listen to this! – Sonnet #29 – due M Feb 4.

Read Rodenburg – The Givens, The Word, Alliteration, Assonance, Onomatopoeia.

Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Feb 10 at midnight.

Week Five: M Feb 11 – W Feb 13

First Folio – the actor's text. Neil Freeman and Jan Gist.

Read Rodenburg – Rhythm, Pauses & Irregularities of Rhythm, The Line. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Feb 17 at midnight.

**For Colored Girls...* – departmental opening Thursday, February 14.

Week Six: M Feb 18 – W Feb 20

Monologue work.

Read Rodenburg – Thought and Structuring of Thoughts, Structure of Scenes,

Antithesis. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Feb 24 at midnight.

Week Seven: M Feb 25 – W Feb 27

Monologue work.

Read Rodenburg – Rhyme. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Mar 2 at midnight.

Week Eight: M Mar 3 – W Mar 5

Present monologues for grade.

Hey, listen to this! – Monologue – due W Mar 5.

Read Rodenburg – Prose, Irony, Puns. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Mar 9 at midnight.

Week Nine

SPRING BREAK.

Week Ten: M Mar 17 – W Mar 19

Bring in scenes to share.

Read Rodenburg – Language Games, Repetition, The Story, Location, Stage Directions, Soliloquy. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Mar 23 at midnight.

Week Eleven: M Mar 24 – W Mar 26

Scene work.

Read Rodenburg – Imaginative Exploration of Text, Anchoring the Text, Focus and Energy, Summary. Response due on Nicenet by Sun, Mar 30 at midnight.

Week Twelve: M Mar 31 – W Apr 2

Scene work.

Hey, listen to this! – Scene – due W Apr 2.

Week Thirteen: M Apr 7 – W Apr 9

Scene work.

**Cabaret* – departmental opening Thursday, April 10.

Week Fourteen: M Apr 14 – W Apr 16

Presentation of scenes for grade.

Week Fifteen: M Apr 21 – W Apr 23

TBA

Hey, listen to this! – final Sonnet – due W Apr 23.

Week Sixteen: M Apr 28 – T Apr 29

Final written assessment of craft due Monday.

Review and course evaluation.

Field trip to Maymont.

FINAL EXAM: time and location TBD

Sonnet of your choice (other than #29)

APPENDIX F

Oxy-Rhythm Exercises

Janet B. Rodgers

Voice and Speech Trainer

Virginia Commonwealth University

jrodgers@vcu.edu

Up-dated 7/25/07

Prelude:

Lying on your back, hug your arms. Bring knees toward body. Roll gently from side to side imagining that you have a large fox-tail attached to your tailbone and a long rat-tail attached to the crown of your head. As you roll, imagine that your two tails extend out farther and farther along the floor as your spine lengthens with them.

1. Rock 'N Roll

Lying on your back with knees up toward ceiling, begin by moving between 12:00 and 6:00, from top of curve (12:00) to tailbone (6:00) in small of back. Release the joint at base of skull. Soften jaw and roof of mouth. Increase rhythm. Press quickly into your heels and release. Let the spine and head respond to the impulse. Continue with full awareness of the wave of your entire spine. Be aware of breath moving into your lower torso. Increase rate of movement to the point where the wave motion is intuitive. Now begin to inhale and exhale fully. Allow a sound to release on exhalation. Gently siren up and down, moving through your pitch registers and being mindful of breaks in voice. Work from lower-pitched sirens to higher pitched sirens and then return to lower, eventually allowing the sound to fade away. Continue to rock and roll as you return to breath without sounds. Let the movement get smaller and smaller until all that is left is the body memory of the movement and sound. Let that evaporate like a drop of water evaporating to stillness.

Purpose: To contact abdominal release and support of breath and to release the head and neck and allow for free undulation of the spine from head to tail while integrating full range of gentle sounds.

2. Upper body wing stretch

Lying on back with knees bent toward ceiling, place hands on forehead, palms up. Grasp four fingers of one hand with fingers of the other. Press gently into heels of feet while allowing the small of the back to flatten along the floor. Bring elbows toward each other, inhaling on a count of 3. Allow breath to widen your lower ribcage on inhalation. Pulsate elbows to each other on 3 sips of breath as you expand your breath capacity further while widening ribcage. Exhale on a 6 count as elbows return toward the floor. Repeat 3 times on each side.

3. Arm Stretch from Side to Side

Feldenkrais based: Lying on the floor with knees up toward ceiling, hand over outstretched arm stretch to side with rhythmic breath. Inhale on a three count as you move hand over arm that outstretches to the right. Let whole torso and knees follow as fingers extend beyond the arm that is underneath. Take three small inhalations into side of ribcage that is exposed to ceiling while walking fingers along floor (as if "Walking thru the yellow pages"). Exhale on a four count as hand moves along top of extended arm back to center of body. Knees should begin up toward the ceiling and fall from side to side with the action of the arm and breath. Inhale as you reverse direction.

Purpose: To coordinate breath and release whole spine on diagonal.

4. The Dead Bug

Stretch out body. Arms over head on floor. Soft and floppy...ballerina circle...fingertips almost touching. Bring one knee up toward ceiling. Lift other leg 30 degrees off of floor. Press lower back against the floor as you Inhale on three count as you raise arms 45 degrees. Lengthen back of neck along floor while inhaling. Sip three breaths into lower ribcage and then release arms back to floor. Keep the leg up at 30 degrees while raising the arms and lowering three or four times. Bring knee to nose on exhalation before switching sides.

Purpose: To strengthen quads while keeping upper body released and free

5. Sit- ups on diagonal. DRAGON BREATH

Lying on back with knees up toward ceiling, arms on floor over head inhale on three count. Exhale on eight siccadic count with arms reaching on a diagonal outside of legs to the left. (With each reach there will be a small inhalation following the exhalation.) Release back toward floor. Double clap of hands. Exhale remaining breath. Release more of your back toward the floor. Double clap, inhaling while releasing muscles in back. Double clap again, inhaling while releasing neck. Tap on floor overhead and repeat on other side. As your abdominal core strengthens, increase exhalations to 12 on each side. Then to a 16 count on each side. Then on a 20 count on each side.

Purpose: To strengthen core muscles and release spine on a diagonal.

6. Knee Drop

Knees toward chest. Feet off of floor. Hands in clapping position. Drop right knee toward floor on three count while extending left leg straight up toward ceiling, foot flexed. Sip three breaths into ribcage as you straighten leg into heel. Let upper body and arms follow naturally. Release on four count back to original position, clapping hands and feet together as you reach center at end of exhalation. Repeat on other side, dropping left knee toward floor. Repeat three times on each side, alternating sides.

7. Hamstring and Lower Back Stretch

Lying on back, knees to chest, arms and hands extended overhead. Inhale on three count as you straighten legs, heels toward the ceiling. Point toes, flex feet, point toes, flex feet quickly while you inhale on a three count releasing breath into abdomen. Exhale on 4 count as you release knees toward chest.

Purpose: To stretch the ligaments and muscles of legs and back

[Advanced version of this, with each leg straighten, turn legs from hips in a different direction:

- 1. feet parallel and touching,*
- 2. feet turned out, heels touching,*
- 3. feet turned in, big toes touching.*

Always keep legs parallel as you return to original position with knees bent.]

8. Tibetan Leg Lift

Stretch lower body out along floor. Place hands under buttocks, palms down. Using abdominal muscles, lift straight legs up 90 degrees inhaling on a 3 count. [In more advanced work, lift head also.] Sip three breaths using diaphragm. Controlling your exhalation of breath, lower legs and head on 6 count, keeping upper body as released and muscularly uninvolved as possible. [In advanced version, lengthen back of neck as you lower head towards the floor.] As you become increasingly adept at slowly lowering your legs, increase to a 9 count and then to a 12 count.

Purpose: To increase core strength

9. Scissors

With legs raised toward the ceiling, hands still under buttocks, scissor slowly on eight count with toes pointed. Inhale and exhale with rhythm of movement. Shift to legs at a 45 degree angle (10 inches off of the ground), scissor slowly on eight count with toes pointed, again coordinating movement with inhalations and exhalations. With toes pointed, raise legs again toward ceiling, scissor and increase

speed of the scissor movement until you propel yourself into a sitting position.

Purpose: To work inner thigh diagonal back muscles and increase abdominal endurance.

10. The Hawaiian Volcano

Lift yourself onto an island, placing yourself on your sitz bones with straight back and legs wide apart, feet flexed. Tap hands on the floor behind your back. Place left hand on left toes and then bring right hand over head on 8 count as if tracing the stars in the sky. (Stretch progressively keeping chest open to the sky. Follow tracing hand with your eyes. End up down over to left knee. DO NOT BOUNCE. JUST STRETCH.) Return to center and tap behind you with hands before exhaling to 3 count on "Ha, Ha, Ha!" with hands replicating a volcano erupting from the crown of your head. Repeat and stretch to other side. Follow each side stretch with volcano erupting on "Ha, ha, ha, ha" on 3 count. Repeat 3 times on each side. End by bring legs to center.

Purpose: To stretch the intercostal muscles and leg muscles and ligaments. To focus breath into side of rib cage.

11. The Martha Graham

Sitting up on sitz bones, cross-legged with a straight back, grab knees. Pull upper torso forward on three count, inhaling. (Rib cage will seem to curve forward.) Roll down on 6 count exhaling, starting at base of spine. Keep focal point with eyes forward until last possible moment. (As you roll down, imagine yourself easing your back into a bowl.) Tip forward onto sitz bones on 3 count, inhaling. Roll up on 6 count, exhaling - starting at base of spine.

Purpose: To improve spine and hip flexibility

12. Leaving the Jaw Behind

Sitting cross-legged, twist torso to right as far as you can comfortably go. Look down. Look up while inhaling. Leave your jaw behind. Let tongue protrude over lower lip. Vocalize a gentle sounding release on "Ha Ha", playing with pitch. Look down while exhaling. Join up with your lower jaw. Repeat looking up with vocalization and down with breath pattern three times. Return torso to center, leading the movement with your eyes as if following a planet in the sky. Twist torso to the left as far as you can comfortably go. Repeat looking up and down with breath. Return to center.

13. The Spaceship

Sitting cross-legged, twist body to the right. Look down and watch imaginary spaceship take off and travel to point above your eyes. Follow this with your head

and eyes, leaving your jaw behind. Inhale at the same time. As spaceship arrives overhead, exhale a sound of awe and amazement as your eyes and head follow the spaceship to the horizon behind you on the other side. Repeat in other direction. Repeat both parts again.

Purpose: To increase neck flexibility.

14. The Holo-Vac

Sitting cross-legged with straight back, put left palm flat on floor. Allow energy to travel down thru heel of palm. Lift right arm and reach across to left ear. Gently pull head toward the side. Look down and exhale. Look up and inhale. Make gentle vocalization. Look down and exhale. Look up and inhale. Make a gentle vocalization. Look down and exhale. Look up and inhale. Make gentle vocalization. Release hand from ear and reach left hand over your head to the right ear. Repeat on other side.

Purpose: To stretch neck muscles.

15. Tibetan Card Table

Sit on floor with straight back and with legs extended out in front of you. Arms at side. Palms down on floor. On 3 count push belly up toward ceiling, as if pulled by a rope attached to your belly button. 3 small inhalations in flat table position. Release back to sitting on a 4 count. Repeat 4 times.

Purpose: To increase spine flexibility and core strength.

16. Butterfly Breath

Sitting up on sitz bones with long back bring knees toward your body. Then let them drop out to the side, like butterfly wings. Have space of 1 ft. between feet. Hanging over with both hands resting gently between feet, breathe into your lower back on a 3 count. Exhale on a 4 count, letting yourself hang over and walk out further on each count (like "Walking your fingers through the yellow pages".) Stop. Breathe into lower back on 3 count. Walk out on 4 count. Repeat three times. Inhale. Roll up on exhalation, starting at the base of spine. Satz... Holding position and breathing at top of roll up.

17. The Candle

On back, inhaling on 3 count bring legs up toward ceiling. Your weight should be on your arms, NOT on your neck. Exhaling on 4 count, with flexed foot, bring rt. leg down over head toward floor. Keep left leg pointing toward ceiling. Maintain double direction. Inhale on 3 count, bring rt.leg back up so both legs are together. Exhale on 4 count as you bring left leg over head toward the floor. Inhale on 3count, bringing left leg back up over body. Exhale on 4 count bringing both legs

over your head toward the floor. Repeat this pattern 4 times.

Purpose: To exercise the diaphragm in a reverse position and to increase core strength, focus and control.

Transition: Grab ankle while bracing yourself with other hand. Slowly roll yourself down so that your back is on the floor.

18. The Fish

Extend your legs. With hands under the buttocks, palms down, lift yourself onto your elbows to a three count. Upper back will arch. Take three saccadic sips of breath into lower body. Exhale on 4 count, returning to flat back position. Repeat 3 times.

19. The "Twist Again"

Laying flat with feet on the floor, lift buttocks off the floor. Singing, "Let's twist again like we did last summer...." joyfully engage your body and arms in the dancing of the Twist. Ease body back to floor on an exuberant, gleeful "Whee!"

20. Rolling Stone and Penguin

Grab knees. Tuck head. On exhalation, begin to roll your body up. With each count of 4 come up farther and farther, rocking back and forth on each count like a child at play. Find a balance on your sitz bones. Clap hands and feet together as if they are seal flippers while making an open-throated sound on an 8 count. Inhale on balanced center and roll back on exhalation. Return to center balance on the inhalation, each time rocking farther and farther forward. When finally at balanced place, clap hands and feet together on 8 count like a seal, again while making an open throated sound. Eyes to right and left on 8 count while holding position. SATZ : Hold position on a 4 count before moving into next exercise.

Purpose: To exercise diaphragm in a controlled manner while spine is curved and body is rolling.

21. LA Lockup of Superman/Superwoman

Lying on stomach, extend right arm above your head while extending your right leg out along the floor (like Superman flying). Put other hand behind your back (like it is being handcuffed). Inhale to three count. Raise arm and leg off of floor with double direction of energy. Sip three breaths while suspended. Exhale on a four count, bring arm and leg back toward the floor. Repeat three times and then change sides.

22. The Balloon

On your knees in Child's Pose (curled up like a ball), pretend you are a balloon. Grab your ankles. Pull your head toward your body. Fill your belly, back and lower ribcage on a 3 count. Superinflate with 3 sips of breath. Exhale on a 6 count. Repeat. Imagine you are flying in the clouds across the Pacific Ocean to India.

23. Indian Beggar

In child's pose, arms and hands along body toward feet, head facing downward. Breathe into lower rib cage on 3 count, extending one arm out along the floor with palm turned up toward ceiling. Sip on three count (as you receive some gold coins), then bring arm back with hands closed. Repeat on other side. Then, with arms and hands still down near the feet, release hands. Inhale on three count. Sip on three count, expanding the lungs even further. Exhale on 4 count. Repeat.

24. Modified Push Up

Get onto all fours with back relaxing and swaying downward toward the floor. Inhale on a 3 count. Lower upper body on a 6 count exhalation, putting weight on arms. Touch forehead to the floor. Inhale on a 3 count while raising your body. Sip three saccadic breaths while on all fours in original position and then repeat. Repeat 4 times. Increase number of times as your arms get stronger. Be sure that elbows bend back toward your body, **not** out at an angle away from your body.

25. The Hairdryer

On hands and knees, exhale and bring right knee toward head while bringing head toward knee. Inhale bringing head up to parallel to floor while bring right leg straight out behind you, parallel to floor. Repeat 8 times with right leg. Switch legs.

Purpose: coordination of breath and movement

26. Breath Roll Up

Stand back onto feet with head hanging down toward floor. Release at hips. Hands on floor. Knees slightly bent. Inhale and roll up as far as you can on one exhalation. Take as many inhalations and exhalations as you need to complete this roll-up. Only roll up on the exhalation of breath. When arriving at an upright position, check to make sure that the neck is released and that the knees are soft and easy. Extend arms out and up like DaVinci's perfect Man/Woman. Imagine that your pelvis is the seat of a ferris wheel. Without moving the upper body, let your pelvis rock forward and backwards, like the seat of a ferris wheel that has just stopped. Breathe into lower body. Let arms drop to sides.

Purpose: To return to center with balance, release and a sense of purpose.

From this place, we begin to walk in space, utilizing the notions of 2nd Circle Energy (Rodenberg) and Double Direction (Barba).

VITA

Daniel Charles Dennis was born on August 23, 1973 in Genesee County, Michigan, and grew up in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin. He graduated as valedictorian from Mount Horeb High School in 1991, and went on to receive his Bachelor of Arts with distinction from the University of Wisconsin – Madison in 1995. From 1995 to 2006, he lived in Seattle, Washington and worked as an educator, actor, singer, music director, conductor, composer, designer, writer, and director for such organizations as Seattle Opera, Seattle Children's Theatre, Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Living Voices, Village Theatre, and Pacific Science Center. A member of Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA), the International Planetarium Society (IPS), and the Mid-America Theatre Conference (MATC), he has performed throughout the United States and in South Korea and Spain.